



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

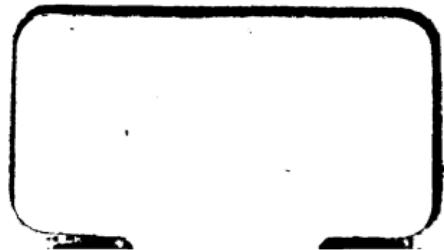
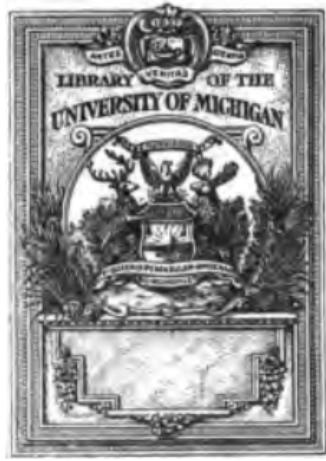
Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

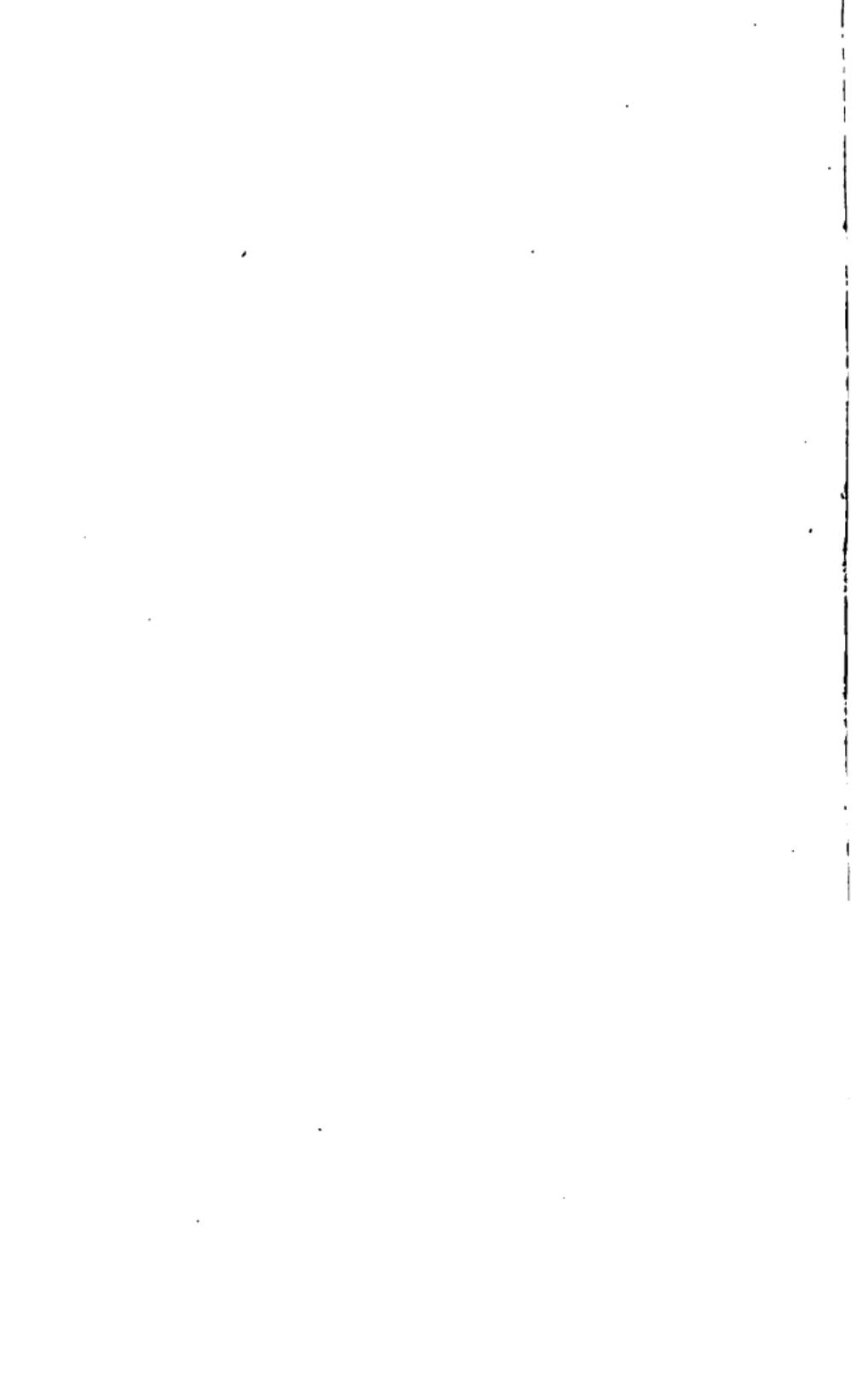
Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>

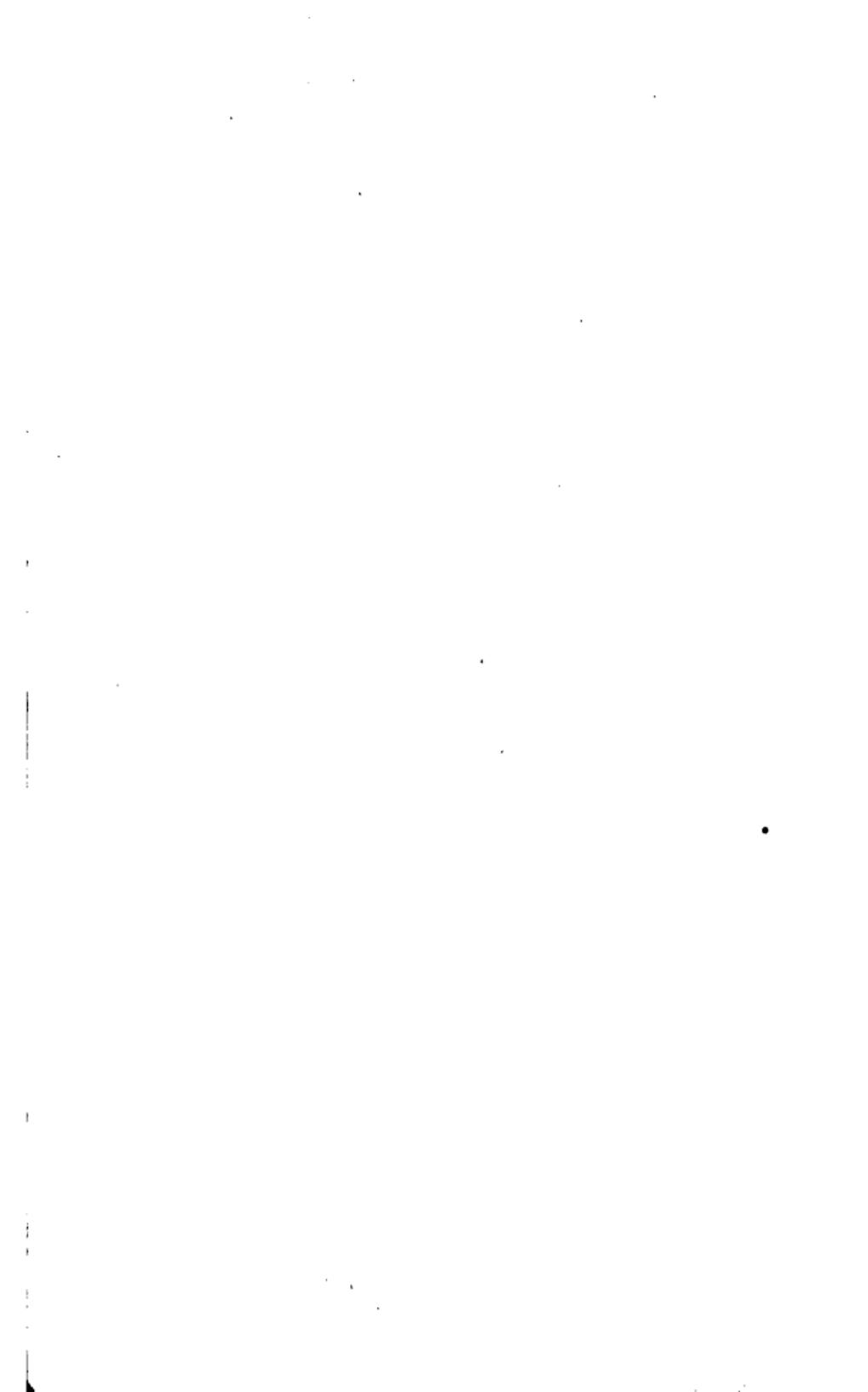


828

C 286es

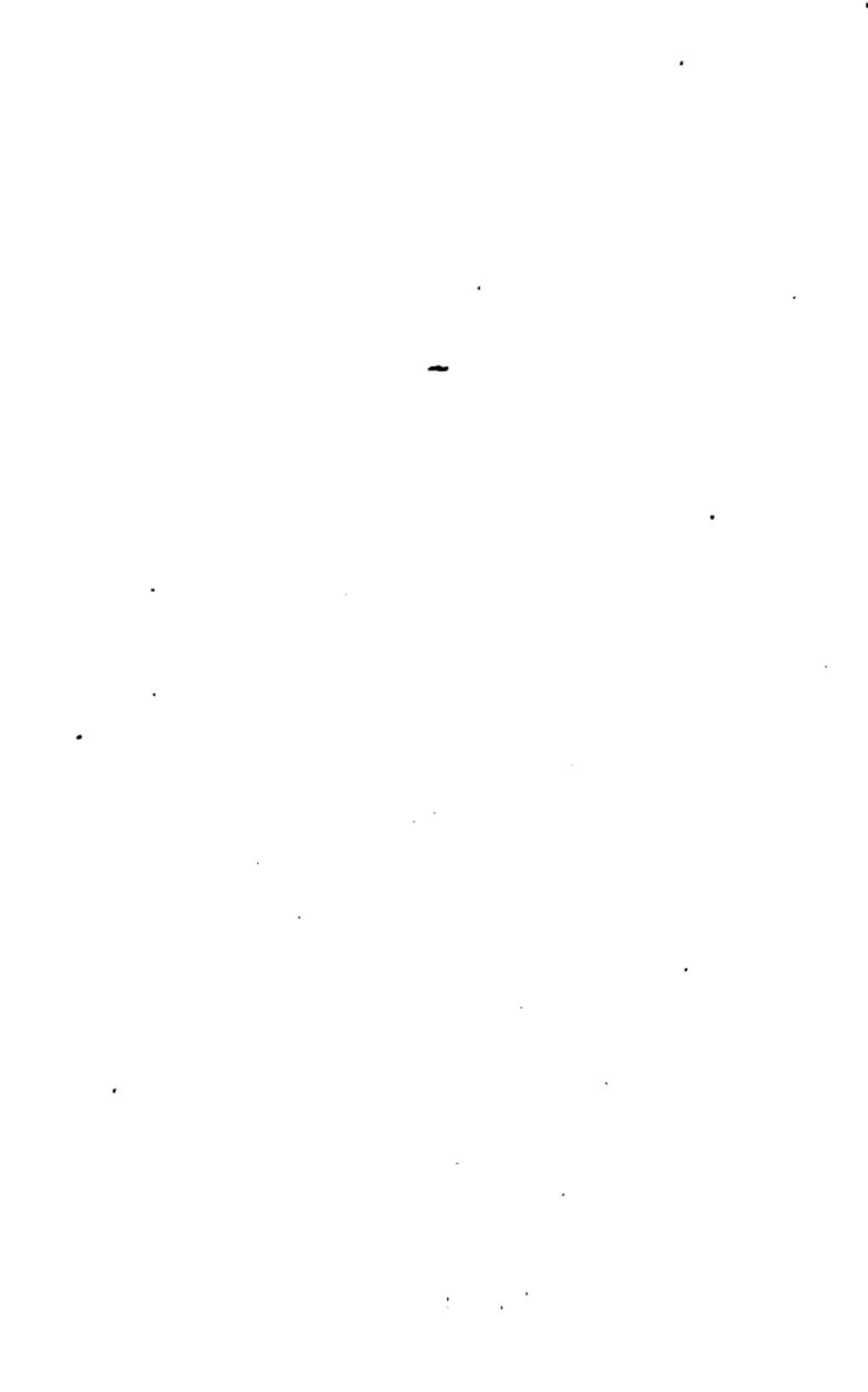
D 73







LITTLE MASTERPIECES



Little Masterpieces

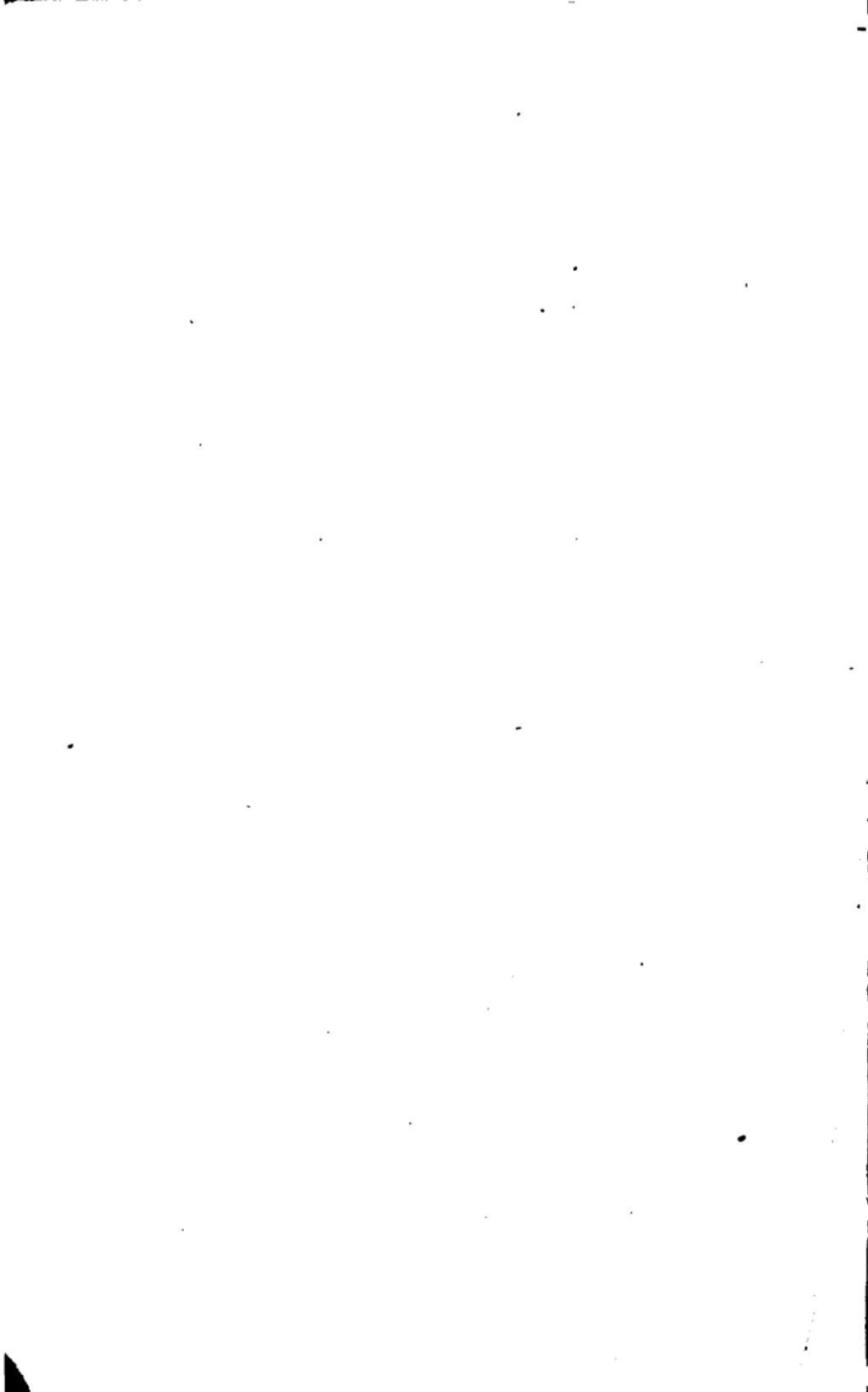
Edited by Bliss Perry

ESSAY ON BIOGRAPHY

**SELECTED BIOGRAPHICAL AND
HISTORICAL STUDIES AND
OTHER WRITINGS**

NEW YORK

1926



Little Masterpieces

Edited by Bliss Perry

THOMAS CARLYLE

ESSAY ON BIOGRAPHY

**SELECTED BIOGRAPHICAL AND
HISTORICAL SKETCHES AND
OTHER WRITINGS**

NEW YORK

DOUBLEDAY, PAGE & COMPANY
1906

**COPYRIGHT, 1898,
BY
DOUBLEDAY & McCLURE CO.**

Contents

	PAGE
EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION	ix
ESSAYS:	
<i>Biography</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>Boswell's Life of Johnson</i>	<i>32</i>
LIFE OF STERLING:	
<i>Coleridge</i>	<i>79</i>
THE FRENCH REVOLUTION:	
<i>Mirabeau</i>	<i>95</i>
<i>The Flight to Varennes</i>	<i>103</i>
<i>Charlotte Corday</i>	<i>127</i>
CROMWELL'S LETTERS AND SPEECHES:	
<i>Battle of Dunbar</i>	<i>142</i>
SARTOR RESARTUS:	
<i>The Watch-Tower</i>	<i>160</i>
<i>The Everlasting No ✓</i>	<i>165</i>
<i>Ghosts</i>	<i>178</i>
PAST AND PRESENT:	
✓ <i>Labor</i>	<i>182</i>
✓ <i>Reward</i>	<i>190</i>

181359



Introduction



Editor's Introduction

THE volume of selections from Macaulay in this series of Little Masterpieces begins with a passage from his essay on History, and includes a portion of the essay on Boswell's "Life of Johnson." Within a few months after the publication of the latter essay, Thomas Carlyle, like Macaulay, wrote a brilliant review of Croker's edition of Boswell. It appeared in "Frazer's," and was prefaced, in the previous number of the magazine (April, 1832), by an essay on Biography, in which Carlyle tells us not only how History gets made but how it ought to be written. He holds that History is the essence of innumerable Biographies, that the record of the world is the record of the men—particularly the great men—who have lived here. If you write the lives of these men, you have written History.

This essay on Biography, followed by Carlyle's estimate of great-souled "old Samuel," is doubly interesting when read in connection with Macaulay's view of the function of the

Introduction

modern historian, and his picturesque but infinitely more superficial delineation of Dr. Johnson. But it furnishes, quite aside from the interest involved in such a comparison, an appropriate introduction to the writings of Carlyle.

The chapter from "The Life of Sterling," describing Coleridge's sojourn at Highgate, shows consummate skill in portraiture, a type of literary art in which Carlyle's mastery was and is indisputable. Indeed "The Life of Sterling" throughout is a book often used to point the argument that Carlyle's real strength was as an artist rather than a prophet.

I have made three selections from "The French Revolution": the portraits of Mirabeau and of Charlotte Corday, and the narration of the King's flight to Varennes—a marvelous piece of workmanship that combines the rapidity and confusion of reality with the dramatic tension which only the pure imagination can produce. There is a similar art in the description of the Battle of Dunbar, from "Cromwell's Letters and Speeches"; the same swift, graphic touches, the effective marshaling of a chaos of petty details; and there is here besides what there was not in the King's flight to Varennes, namely, a Hero after Carlyle's own heart, trumpets "shatter-

Introduction

ing with fierce clangor Night's silence," and horse and foot storming home "like tornado tempests" till the Lord General "makes a halt" and sings, with his whole army, the Hundred-and-Seventeenth Psalm, rolling it "strong and great against the sky." Surely if ever "words are things," it is in passages like these.

Yet Carlyle affected to despise words, and looked upon the mere literary craftsman with contempt. He wished to be regarded as a teacher, a prophet, or as nothing; and a volume which attempts to give a fair representation of his writings must not confine itself to historical portraits, however admirable, or to stirring bits of narrative. One of his most characteristic books is "*Sartor Resartus*" ("The Tailor Patched"), and "*Sartor*," as Dr. Garnett has said, "will be read as a gospel or not at all."

It is difficult to present in a few pages of extracts an adequate idea of this gospel; the doctrine that "all visible things are mere emblems—a Clothing—a suit of Raiment put on for a season and to be laid off." The first selection is a description of the watch-tower of the clothes-philosopher, Professor Teufels-drockh, from which he gazes down upon the shifting phenomena of human life. The

Introduction

second is the famous episode of Carlyle's own "conversion" in Leith Walk, Edinburgh, transferred to Teufelsdröckh and the Rue St. Thomas de l'Enfer, in Paris, and given the title of "The Everlasting No." The Everlasting No is the voice of the Devil; "the spirit that denies." Against that voice the hero records his protest, and asserts his spiritual freedom. Finally, from the chapter, "Natural Supernaturalism," I have chosen the passage here entitled "Ghosts," both as illustrating the fundamental doctrine of the book that Space and Time are illusions, mere Forms of Thought, and as a prose-poem which attains the sublimity of an Hebrew Psalm.

"Sartor Resartus" is written throughout in Carlylese, a dialect whose vigor and fitness for its purpose are best recognized by those who learned it young and have long loved it. But there are many readers who find it a barrier which they are not willing to take the trouble to surmount. I have had these readers in mind, in closing this little volume with the two noble and beautiful chapters from "Past and Present" called "Labor" and "Reward." The essence of Carlyle's teaching is there, unobscured by grotesqueness or caprice in form. It is a doctrine which is slowly

Introduction

**transforming the modern world, leavening
little by little the crude democracy which
Carlyle himself was foolish enough to scorn,
and making the earth more heavenly.**

BLISS PERRY.

Selected Essays



Essay on Biography*

MAN'S sociality of nature evinces itself, in spite of all that can be said, with abundant evidence by this one fact, were there no other ; the unspeakable delight he takes in Biography. It is written, " The proper study of mankind is man ; " to which study, let us candidly admit, he, by true or by false methods, applies himself, nothing loath. " Man is perennially interesting to man ; nay, if we look strictly to it, there is nothing else interesting." How inexpressibly comfortable to know our fellow-creature ; to see into him, understand his goings forth, decipher the whole heart of his mystery : nay, not only to see into him, but even to see out of him, to view the world altogether as he views it ; so that we can theoretically construe him, and could almost practically personate him ; and do now thoroughly discern both what manner of man he is, and what manner of thing he has got to work on and live on !

A scientific interest and a poetic one alike inspire us in this matter. A scientific : be-

* *Fraser's Magazine*, 1832.

Essay on Biography

cause every mortal has a Problem of Existence set before him, which were it only, what for the most it is, the Problem of keeping soul and body together, must be to a certain extent *original*, unlike every other ; and yet, at the same time, so *like* every other ; like our own, therefore ; instructive, moreover, since we also are indentured to *live*. A poetic interest still more : for precisely this same struggle of human Free-will against material Necessity, which every man's Life, by the mere circumstance that the man continues alive, will more or less victoriously exhibit,—is that which above all else, or rather inclusive of all else, calls the Sympathy of mortal hearts into action ; and whether as acted, or as represented and written of not only is Poetry, but is the sole Poetry possible. Borne onwards by which two all-embracing interests, may the earnest Lover of Biography expand himself on all sides, and indefinitely enrich himself. Looking with the eyes of every new neighbor, he can discern a new world different for each : feeling with the heart of every neighbor, he lives with every neighbor's life, even as with his own. Of these millions of living men, each individual is a mirror to us ; a mirror both scientific and poetic ; or, if you will, both natural and magical ;—from which

Essay on Biography

one would so gladly draw aside the gauze veil ; and, peering therein, discern the image of his own natural face, and the supernatural secrets that prophetically lie under the same !

Observe, accordingly, to what extent, in the actual course of things, this business of Biography is practised and relished. Define to thyself, judicious Reader, the real significance of these phenomena, named Gossip, Egoism, Personal Narrative (miraculous or not), Scandal, Railery, Slander, and such like ; the sum-total of which (with some fractional addition of a better ingredient, generally too small to be noticeable) constitutes that other grand phenomenon still called "Conversation." Do they not mean wholly : *Biography* and *Autobiography* ? Not only in the common Speech of men ; but in all Art too, which is or should be the concentrated and conserved essence of what men can speak and show, Biography is almost the one thing needful.

Even in the highest works of Art, our interest, as the critics complain, is too apt to be strongly or even mainly of a Biographic sort. In the Art we can nowise forget the Artist : while looking on the *Transfiguration*, while studying the *Iliad*, we ever strive to figure to ourselves what spirit dwelt in Raphael ; what a head was that of Homer,

Essay on Biography

wherein, woven of Elysian light and Tartarean gloom, that old world fashioned itself together, of which these written Greek characters are but a feeble though perennial copy. The Painter and the Singer are present to us ; we partially and for the time become the very Painter and the very Singer, while we enjoy the Picture and the Song. Perhaps, too, let the critic say what he will, this is the highest enjoyment, the clearest recognition, we can have of these. Art indeed is Art ; yet Man also is Man. Had the *Transfiguration* been painted without human hand ; had it grown merely on the canvas, say by atmospheric influences, as lichen-pictures do on rocks,—it were a grand Picture doubtless ; yet nothing like so grand as *the Picture*, which, on opening our eyes, we everywhere in Heaven and in Earth see painted ; and everywhere pass over with indifference,—because the Painter was not a Man. Think of this ; much lies in it. The Vatican is great ; yet poor to Chimborazo or the Peak of Teneriffe ; its dome is but a foolish Big-endian or Little-endian chip of an egg-shell, compared with that star-fretted Dome where Arcturus and Orion glance forever ; which latter, notwithstanding, who looks at, save perhaps some necessitous stargazer bent to make Almanacs ; some thick-

Essay on Biography

quilted watchman, to see what weather it will prove? The Biographic interest is wanting; no Michael Angelo was He who built that "Temple of Immensity;" therefore do we, pitiful Littlenesses as we are, turn rather to wonder and to worship in the little toy-box of a Temple built by our like.

Still more decisively, still more exclusively does the Biographic interest manifest itself, as we descend into lower regions of spiritual communication; through the whole range of what is called Literature. Of History, for example, the most honored, if not honorable species of composition, is not the whole purport Biographic? "History," it has been said, "is the essence of innumerable Biographies." Such, at least, it should be: whether it is, might admit of question. But, in any case, what hope have we in turning over those old interminable Chronicles, with their garrulities and insipidities; or still worse, in patiently examining those modern Narrations, of the Philosophic kind, where "Philosophy, teaching by Experience," has to sit like owl on house-top, *seeing* nothing, *understanding* nothing, uttering only, with such solemnity, her perpetual, most wearisome *hoo-hoo*:—what hope have we, except the for most part fallacious one of gaining some ac-

Essay on Biography

quaintance with our fellow-creatures, though dead and vanished, yet dear to us : how they got along in those old days, suffering and doing ; to what extent, and under what circumstances, they resisted the Devil and triumphed over him, or struck their colors to him, and were trodden under foot by him ; how, in short, the perennial Battle went, which men name Life, which we also in these new days, with indifferent fortune, have to fight, and must bequeath to our sons and grandsons to go on fighting—till the Enemy one day be quite vanquished and abolished, or else the great Night sink and part the combatants ; and thus, either by some Millennium or some new Noah's Deluge, the Volume of Universal History wind itself up ! Other hope, in studying such Books, we have none : and that it is a deceitful hope, who that has tried knows not ? A feast of widest Biographic insight is spread for us ; we enter full of hungry anticipations : alas, like so many other feasts which Life invites us to, a mere Ossian's "feast of *shells*,"—the food and liquor being all emptied out and clean gone, and only the vacant dishes and deceitful emblems thereof left ! Your modern Historical Restaurateurs are indeed little better than high-priests of Famine, that keep choicest china dinner-sets, only no din-

Essay on Biography

ner to serve therein. Yet such is our Biographic appetite, we run trying from shop to shop, with ever new hope; and, unless we could eat the wind, with ever new disappointment.

Again, consider the whole class of Fictitious Narratives ; from the highest category of epic or dramatic Poetry, in Shakspeare and Homer, down to the lowest of froth Prose in the Fashionable Novel. What are all these but so many mimic Biographies ? Attempts, here by an inspired Speaker, there by an uninspired Babbler, to deliver himself, more or less ineffectually, of the grand secret wherewith all hearts labor oppressed : The significance of Man's Life ; which deliverance, even as traced in the unfurnished head, and printed at the Minerva Press, finds readers. For, observe, though there is *a* greatest Fool, as a superlative in every kind ; and *the* most Foolish man in the Earth is now indubitably living and breathing, and did this morning or lately eat breakfast, and is even now digesting the same ; and looks out on the world with his dim horn-eyes, and inwardly forms some unspeakable theory thereof: yet where shall the authentically Existing be personally met with ! Can one of us, otherwise than by guess, know that we have got sight of him, have orally communed with him ? To take even

Essay on Biography

the narrower sphere of this our English Metropolis, can any one confidently say to himself that he has conversed with the identical, individual Stupidest man now extant in London ? No one. Deep as we dive in the Profound, there is ever a new depth opens : where the ultimate bottom may lie, through what new scenes of being we must pass before reaching it (except that we know it does lie somewhere, and might by human faculty and opportunity be reached), is altogether a mystery to us. Strange, tantalizing pursuit ! We have the fullest assurance, not only that there is a Stupidest of London men actually resident, with bed and board of some kind, in London ; but that several persons have been or perhaps are now speaking face to face with him : while for us, chase it as we may, such scientific blessedness will too probably be forever denied !—But the thing we meant to enforce was this comfortable fact that no known Head was so wooden, but there might be other heads to which it were a genius and Friar Bacon's Oracle. Of no given Book, not even of a Fashionable Novel, can you predicate with certainty that its vacuity is absolute ; that there are not other vacuities which shall partially replenish themselves therefrom, and esteem it a *plenum*. How

Essay on Biography

knowest thou, may the distressed Novel-wright exclaim, that I, here where I sit, am the Foolishest of existing mortals ; that this my Long-ear of a Fictitious Biography shall not find one and the other, into whose still longer ears it may be the means, under Providence, of instilling somewhat ! We answer, None knows, none can certainly know: therefore, write on, worthy Brother, even as thou canst, even as it has been given thee.

Here, however, in regard to "Fictitious Biographies," and much other matter of like sort, which the greener mind in these days inditeth, we may as well insert some singular sentences on the importance and significance of *Reality*, as they stand written for us in Professor Gottfried Sauerteig's *Æsthetische Springwurzeln*, a work, perhaps, as yet new to most English readers. The Professor and Doctor is not a man whom we can praise without reservation ; neither shall we say that his *Springwurzeln* (a sort of magical picklocks, as he affectedly names them), are adequate to "*start*" every *bolt* that locks up an esthetic mystery ; nevertheless, in his crabbed, one-sided way, he sometimes hits masses of the truth. We endeavor to translate faithfully, and trust the reader will find it worth serious perusal :—

Essay on Biography

"The significance, even for poetic purposes," says Sauerteig, "that lies in REALITY is too apt to escape us; is perhaps only now beginning to be discerned. When we named Rousseau's *Confessions* an elegiaco-didactic Poem, we meant more than an empty figure of speech; we meant a historical scientific fact.

"Fiction, while the feigner of it knows that he is feigning, partakes, more than we suspect, of the nature of *lying*; and has ever an, in some degree, unsatisfactory character. All Mythologies were once Philosophies; were *believed*. The epic poems of old time, so long as they continued *epic*, and had any complete impressiveness, were Histories, and understood to be narratives of *facts*. In so far as Homer employed his gods as mere ornamental fringes and had not himself, or at least did not expect his hearers to have, a belief that they were real agents in those antique doings; so far did he fail to be *genuine*; so far was he a partially *hollow* and false singer; and sang to please only a portion of man's mind, not the whole thereof.

"Imagination is, after all, but a poor matter when it has to part company with Understanding, and even front it hostilely in flat contradiction. Our mind is divided in twain;

Essay on Biography

there is contest ; wherein that which is weaker must needs come to the worse. Now of all feelings, states, principles, call it what you will, in man's mind, is not Belief the clearest, strongest; against which all others contend in vain ? Belief is, indeed, the beginning and first condition of all spiritual force whatsoever : Only in so far as imagination, were it but momentarily, is *believed*, can there be any use or meaning in it, any enjoyment of it. And what is momentary Belief ? The enjoyment of a moment. Whereas a perennial belief were enjoyment perennially, and with the whole united soul.

" It is thus that I judge of the supernatural in an Epic Poem, and would say the instant it has ceased to be authentically supernatural, and become what you call 'Machinery :' sweep it out of sight (*schaff es mir vom Halse*) ! Of a truth, that same 'Machinery,' about which the critics make such hubbub was well named *Machinery*, for it is in very deed mechanical, nowise inspired or poetical. Neither for us is there the smallest esthetic enjoyment in it, save only in this way, that we believe it *to have been believed*—by the Singer or his Hearers, into whose case we now laboriously struggle to transport ourselves ; and so, with stinted enough result, catch some reflex of the

Essay on Biography

Reality, which for them was wholly real, and visible face to face. Whenever it has come so far that your 'Machinery' is avowedly mechanical and unbelieved—what is it else, if we dare tell ourselves the truth, but a miserable, meaningless Deception, kept up by old use and wont alone? If the gods of an *Iliad* are to us no longer authentic Shapes of Terror, heart-stirring, heart-appalling, but only vague-glittering Shadows—what must the dead Pagan gods of an *Epigoniad* be, the dead-living Pagan-Christian gods of a *Lusiad*, the concrete-abstract, evangelical-metaphysical gods of a *Paradise Lost*. Superannuated lumber! Cast raiment at best, in which some poor mime, strutting and swaggering, may or may not set forth new noble Human Feelings (again a Reality), and so secure, or not secure, our pardon of such hoydenish masking; for which, in any case, he has a pardon to ask.

"True enough, none but the earliest Epic Poems can claim this distinction of entire credibility, of Reality: after an *Iliad*, a *Shaster*, a *Koran*, and other the like primitive performances, the rest seem, by this rule of mine, to be altogether excluded from the list. Accordingly, what are all the rest, from Virgil's *Aeneid* downwards, in comparison? Frosty, artificial, heterogeneous things; more of gum-

Essay on Biography

flowers than of roses ; at the best, of the two mixed incoherently together ; to some of which, indeed, it were hard to deny the title of poems ; yet to no one of which can that title belong in any sense even resembling the old high one it in those old days conveyed,—when the epithet ‘divine’ or ‘sacred’ as applied to the uttered word of man was not a vain metaphor, a vain sound, but a real name with meaning. Thus, too, the farther we recede from those early days, when Poetry, as true Poetry is always, was still sacred or divine, and inspired (what ours, in great part, only pretends to be), the more impossible becomes it to produce any, we say not true Poetry, but tolerable semblance of such ; the hollower, in particular, grow all manner of Epics, till at length, as in this generation, the very name of Epic sets men a-yawning, the announcement of a new Epic is received as a public calamity.

“ But what if the *impossible* being once for all quite discarded, the *probable* be well adhered to : how stands it with fiction *then* ? Why, then, I would say, the evil is much mended, but nowise completely cured. We have then, in place of the wholly dead modern Epic, the partially living modern Novel ; to which latter it is much easier to lend that above mentioned, so essential ‘momentary

Essay on Biography

credence' than to the former: indeed, infinitely easier; for the former being flatly incredible, no mortal *can* for a moment credit it, for a moment enjoy it. Thus, here and there, a *Tom Jones*, a *Meister*, a *Crusoe*, will yield no little solacement to the minds of men; though still immeasurably less than a *Reality* would, were the significance thereof as impressively unfolded, were the genius that could so unfold it once given us by the kind Heavens. Neither say thou that proper Realities are wanting: for Man's Life, now, as of old, is the genuine work of God; wherever there is a Man, a God also is revealed, and all that is Godlike: a whole epitome of the Infinite, with its meanings, lies enfolded in the Life of every Man. Only, alas, that the Seer to discern this same Godlike, and with fit utterance *unfold* it for us, is wanting, and may long be wanting!

"Nay, a question arises on us here, wherein the whole German reading-world will eagerly join: Whether man *can* any longer be so interested by the spoken Word, as he often was in those primeval days, when rapt away by its inscrutable power, he pronounced it, in such dialect as he had, to be *transcendental* (to *transcend* all measure), to be sacred, prophetic and the inspiration of a god? For myself, I (*ich meines Ortes*), by

Essay on Biography

faith or by insight, do heartily understand that the answer to such question will be, Yea ! For never that I could in searching find out, has Man been, by Time which devours so much, deprived of any faculty whatsoever that he in any era was possessed of. To my seeming, the babe born yesterday has all the organs of Body, Soul and Spirit, and in exactly the same combination and entireness, that the oldest Pelasgic Greek, or Mesopotamian Patriarch, or Father Adam himself could boast of. Ten fingers, one heart with venous and arterial blood therein, still belong to man that is born of woman : when did he lose any of his spiritual Endowments either ; above all, his highest spiritual Endowment, that of revealing Poetic Beauty, and of adequately receiving the same ? Not the material, not the susceptibility is wanting ; only the Poet, or long series of Poets, to work on these. True, alas too true, the Poet *is* still utterly wanting. or all but utterly : nevertheless have we not centuries enough before us to produce him in ? Him and much else !—I, for the present, will but predict that chiefly by working more and more on REALITY, and evolving more and more wisely *its* inexhaustible meanings ; and, in brief, speaking forth in fit utterance whatsoever our

Essay on Biography

whole soul *believes*, and ceasing to speak forth what thing soever our whole soul does not believe,—will this high emprise be accomplished, or approximated to."

These notable, and not unfounded, though partial and *deep*-seeing rather than wide-seeing observations on the great import of REALITY, considered even as a poetic material, we have inserted the more willingly, because a transient feeling to the same purpose may often have suggested itself to many readers; and, on the whole, it is good that every reader and every writer understand, with all intensity of conviction, what quite infinite worth lies in *Truth*; how all-pervading, omnipotent, in man's mind, is the thing we name *Belief*. For the rest, Herr Sauerteig, though one-sided, on this matter of Reality, seems heartily persuaded, and is not perhaps so ignorant as he looks. It cannot be unknown to him, for example, what noise is made about "Invention;" what a supreme rank this faculty is reckoned to hold in the poetic endowment. Great truly is Invention; nevertheless, that is but a poor exercise of it with which Belief is not concerned. "An Irishman with whisky in his head," as poor Byron said, will invent you, in this kind, till there is enough and to spare.

Essay on Biography

Nay, perhaps, if we consider well, the highest exercise of Invention has, in very deed, nothing to do with Fiction ; but is an invention of new Truth, what we can call a Revelation ; which last does undoubtedly transcend all other poetic efforts, nor can Herr Sauerteig be too loud in its praises. But, on the other hand, whether such effort is still possible for man, Herr Sauerteig and the bulk of the world are probably at issue ;—and will probably continue so till that same “Revelation,” or new “Invention of Reality,” of the sort he desiderates, shall itself make its appearance.

Meanwhile, quitting these airy regions, let any one bethink him how impressive the smallest historical *fact* may become, as contrasted with the grandest *fictitious event* ; what an incalculable force lies for us in this consideration : The Thing which I here hold imaged in my mind did actually occur ; was, in very truth, an element in the system of the All, whereof I too form part ; had therefore, and has, through all time, an authentic being ; is not a dream, but a reality ! We ourselves can remember reading, in *Lord Clarendon*,* with feelings perhaps somehow accidentally opened to it,—certainly with a depth of impression strange to us then and now,—that

* *History of the Rebellion*, iii. 625

Essay on Biography

insignificant-looking passage, where Charles, after the battle of Worcester, glides down, with Squire Careless, from the Royal Oak, at nightfall, being hungry : how, "making a shift to get over hedges and ditches, after walking at least eight or nine miles, which were the more grievous to the King by the weight of his boots (for he could not put *them* off when he cut off his hair, for want of shoes), before morning they came to *a poor cottage, the owner whereof, being a Roman Catholic, was known to Careless.*" How this poor drudge, being knocked up from his snoring, "carried them into a little barn full of hay, which was a better lodging than he had for himself;" and by and by, not without difficulty, brought his Majesty "a piece of bread and a great pot of buttermilk," saying candidly that "he himself lived by his daily labor, and that what he had brought him was the fare he and his wife had :" on which nourishing diet his Majesty, "staying upon the hay-mow," feeds thankfully for two days ; and then departs, under new guidance, having first changed clothes, down to the very shirt and "old pair of shoes," with his landlord ; and so, as worthy Bunyan has it, "goes on his way, and sees him no more." Singular enough, if we will think of it ! This, then, was

Essay on Biography

a genuine flesh-and-blood Rustic of the year 1651 : he did actually swallow bread and buttermilk (not having ale and bacon), and do field-labor : with these hobnailed "shoes" has sprawled through mud-roads in winter, and, jocund or not, driven his team a-field in summer : he made bargains ; had chaffering and higglings, now a sore heart, now a glad one ; was born ; was a son, was a father ; toiled in many ways, being forced to it, till the strength was all worn out of him ; and then—lay down "to rest his galled back," and sleep there till the long-distant morning ! —How comes it, that he alone of all the British rustics who tilled and lived along with him, on whom the blessed sun on that same "fifth day of September" was shining, should have chanced to rise on us ; that this poor pair of clouted Shoes, out of the million million hides that have been tanned, and cut, and worn, should still subsist, and hang visibly together ? We see him but for a moment ; for one moment, the blanket of the Night is rent asunder, so that we behold and see, and then closes over him—forever.

So too, in some *Boswell's Life of Johnson*, how indelible and magically bright does many a little *Reality* dwell in our remembrance ! There is no need that the personages on the

Essay on Biography

scene be a King and Clown ; that the scene be the Forest of the Royal Oak, "on the borders of Staffordshire :" need only that the scene lie on this old firm Earth of ours, where we also have so surprisingly arrived ; that the personages be *men*, and *seen* with the eyes of a man. Foolish enough, how some slight, perhaps mean and even ugly incident, if *real* and well presented, will fix itself in a susceptive memory, and lie ennobled there ; silvered over with the pale cast of thought, with the pathos which belongs only to the Dead. For the Past is all holy to us ; the Dead are all holy, even they that were base and wicked while alive. Their baseness and wickedness was not *They*, was but the heavy and unmanageable Environment that lay round them, with which they fought unprevailing : *they* (the ethereal god-given Force that dwelt in them, and was their *Self*) have now shuffled off that heavy Environment, and are free and pure : their life-long Battle, go how it might, is all ended, with many wounds or with fewer ; they have been recalled from it, and the once harsh-jarring battlefield has become a silent awe-inspiring Golgotha, and *Gottesacker* (Field of God) !—Boswell relates this in itself smallest and poorest of occurrences : "As we walked along the Strand to-

Essay on Biography

night, arm in arm, a woman of the town accosted us in the usual enticing manner. ‘No, no, my girl,’ said Johnson ; ‘it won’t do.’ He, however, did not treat her with harshness ; and we talked of the wretched life of such women.” Strange power of *Reality!* Not even this poorest of occurrences, but now, after seventy years are come and gone, has a meaning for us. Do but consider that it is *true* ; that it did in very deed occur ! That unhappy Outcast, with all her sins and woes, her lawless desires, too complex mischances, her wailings and her riotings, has departed utterly ; alas ! her siren finery has got all besmudged, ground, generations since, into dust and smoke ; of her degraded body, and whole miserable earthly existence, all is away : *she* is no longer here, but far from us, in the bosom of Eternity,—whence we too came, whither we too are bound ! Johnson said, “ No, no, my girl ; it won’t do ;” and then “ we talked ;”—and herewith the wretched one, seen but for the twinkling of an eye, passes on into the utter Darkness. No high Calista, that ever issued from Story-teller’s brain, will impress us more deeply than this meanest of the mean ; and for a good reason : That *she* issued from the Maker of Men.

Essay on Biography

It is well worth the Artist's while to examine for himself what it is that gives such pitiful incidents their memorableness ; his aim likewise is, above all things, to be *memorable*. Half the effect, we already perceive, depends on the object ; on its being *real*, on its being really *seen*. The other half will depend on the observer, and the question now is : How are real objects to be *so seen*, on what quality of observing, or of style in describing, does this so intense pictorial power depend ? Often a slight circumstance contributes curiously to the result—some little, and perhaps to appearance accidental, feature is presented ; a light-gleam, which instantaneously *excites* the mind, and urges it to complete the picture and evolve the meaning thereof for itself. By critics, such light-gleams and their almost magical influence have frequently been noted : but the power to produce such, to select such features as will produce them, is generally treated as a knack, or trick of the trade, a secret for being “ graphic ; ” whereas these magical feats are, in truth, rather inspirations ; and the gift of performing them, which acts unconsciously, without forethought, and as if by nature alone, is properly a *genius* for description.

One grand, invaluable secret there is, how-

Essay on Biography

ever, which includes all the rest, and, what is comfortable, lies clearly in every man's power: *To have an open, loving heart, and what follows from the possession of such.* Truly it has been said, emphatically in these days ought it to be repeated: A loving Heart is the beginning of all Knowledge. This it is that opens the whole mind, quickens every faculty of the intellect to do its fit work, that of *knowing*; and therefrom, by sure consequence, of *vividly uttering-forth*. Other secret for being "graphic" is there none, worth having: but this is an all-sufficient one. See, for example, what a small Boswell can do! Hereby, indeed, is the whole man made a living mirror, wherein the wonders of this ever-wonderful Universe are, in their true light (which is ever a magical, miraculous one) represented, and reflected back on us. It has been said, "the heart sees farther than the head :" but, indeed, without the seeing heart, there is no true seeing for the head so much as possible; all is mere *oversight*, hallucination and vain superficial phantasmagoria, which can permanently profit no one.

Here, too, may we not pause for an instant and make a practical reflection? Considering the multitude of mortals that handle the Pen in these days, and can mostly spell and

Essay on Biography

write without glaring violations of grammar, the question naturally arises : How is it, then, that no Work proceeds from them, bearing any stamp of authenticity and permanence ; of worth for more than one day ? Shiploads of Fashionable Novels, Sentimental Rhymes, Tragedies, Farces, Diaries of Travel, Tales by flood and field, are swallowed monthly into the bottomless Pool. Still does the Press toil : innumerable Paper-makers, Compositors, Printers' Devils, Bookbinders and Hawkers grown hoarse with loud proclaiming, rest not from their labor : and still, in torrents, rushes on the great array of Publications, unpausing, to their final home ; and still Oblivion, like the Grave, cries, Give ! give ! How is it that of all these countless multitudes, no one can attain to the smallest mark of excellence, or produce aught that shall endure longer than "snow-flake on the river" or the foam of penny beer ? We answer : Because they *are* foam ; because there is no *Reality* in them. These Three Thousand men, women and children that make up the army of British Authors do not, if we will well consider it, *see* anything whatever, consequently *have* nothing that they can record and utter, only more or fewer things that they can plausibly pretend to record. The Universe, of Man and Nature, is

Essay on Biography

still quite shut up from them, the "open secret" still utterly a secret ; because no sympathy with Man or Nature, no love and free simplicity of heart has yet unfolded the same. Nothing but a pitiful Image of their own pitiful Self, with its vanities, and grudgings, and ravenous hunger of all kinds, hangs forever painted in the retina of these unfortunate persons; so that the starry ALL, with whatsoever it embraces, does but appear as some expanded magic-lantern shadow of that same Image,—and naturally looks pitiful enough.

It is vain for these persons to allege that they are naturally without gift, naturally stupid and sightless, and so *can* attain to no knowledge of anything ; therefore, in writing of anything, must needs write falsehoods of it, there being in it no truth for them. Not so, good Friends. The stupidest of you has a certain faculty ; were it but that of articulate speech (say, in the Scottish, the Irish, the Cockney dialect, or even in "Governess-English"), and of physically discerning what lies under your nose. The stupidest of you would perhaps grudge to be compared in faculty with James Boswell ; yet see what he has produced ! You do not use your faculty honestly ; your heart is shut up ; full of greediness, malice, discontent ; so your intellectual sense

Essay on Biography

cannot be open. It is vain also to urge that James Boswell had opportunities ; saw great men and great things, such as you can never hope to look on. What make ye of Parson White in Selborne ? He had not only no great men to look on, but not even men ; merely sparrows and cock-chafers : yet has he left us a *Biography* of these ; which, under its title *Natural History of Selborne*, still remains valuable to us, which has copied a little sentence or two *faithfully* from the Inspired Volume of Nature, and so is itself not without inspiration. Go ye and do likewise. Sweep away utterly all frothiness and falsehood from your heart ; struggle unweariedly to acquire, what is possible for every God-created man, a free, open, humble soul ; *speak not at all, in any wise, till you have somewhat to speak*; care not for the *reward* of your speaking, but simply and with undivided mind for the *truth* of your speaking : then be placed in what section of Space and of Time soever, do but open your eyes, and they shall actually *see*, and bring you real *knowledge*, wondrous, worthy of *belief*; and instead of one Boswell and one White, the world will rejoice in a thousand,—stationed on their thousand several watch-towers, to instruct us by indubitable documents, of whatsoever in our

Essay on Biography

so stupendous World comes to light and *is!* Oh, had the Editor of this Magazine but a magic rod to turn all that not inconsiderable Intellect, which now deluges us with artificial fictitious soap-lather and mere Lying, into the faithful study of Reality,—what knowledge of great, everlasting Nature, and of Man's ways and doings therein, would not every year bring us in ! Can we but change one single soap-latherer and mountebank Juggler, into a true Thinker and Doer, who even *tries* honestly to think and do,—great will be our reward.

But to return ; or rather from this point to begin our journey. If now, what with Herr Sauerteig's *Springwurzeln*, what with so much lucubration of our own, it have become apparent how deep, immeasurable is the "worth that lies in *Reality*," and farther, how exclusive the interest which man takes in Histories of Man,—may it not seem lamentable, that so few genuinely good *Biographies* have yet been accumulated in Literature ; that in the whole world, one cannot find, going strictly to work, above some dozen, or baker's dozen, and those chiefly of very ancient date ? Lamentable, yet, after what we have just seen, accountable. Another question might be asked : How comes it that in England we

Essay on Biography

have simply one good Biography, this *Boswell's Johnson*; and of good, indifferent, or even bad attempts at Biography, fewer than any civilized people? Consider the French and Germans, with their Moréris, Bayles Jördenses, Jöchers, their innumerable *Mémoires*, and *Schilderungen*, and *Biographies Universelles*; not to speak of Rousseaus, Goethes, Schubarts, Jung-Stillings: and then contrast with these our poor Birches and Kippises and Pecks; the whole breed of whom, moreover, is now extinct!

With this question, as the answer might lead us far and come out unflattering to patriotic sentiment, we shall not intermeddle; but turn rather, with great pleasure, to the fact, that one excellent Biography *is* actually English;—and even now lies, in Five new Volumes, at our hand, soliciting a new consideration from us; such as, age after age (the Perennial showing ever new phases as *our* position alters), it may long be profitable to bestow on it;—to which task we here, in this position, in this age, gladly address ourselves.

First, however, let the foolish April-fool Day pass by; and our Reader, during these twenty-nine days of uncertain weather that will follow, keep pondering, according to con-

Essay on Biography

venience, the purport of BIOGRAPHY in general: then, with the blessed dew of May-day, and in unlimited convenience of space, shall all that we have written on *Johnson* and *Boswell's Johnson* and *Croker's Boswell's Johnson* be faithfully laid before him.

Boswell's Life of Johnson*

WE have next a word to say of James Boswell. Boswell has already been much commented upon it ; but rather in the way of censure and vituperation than of true recognition. He was a man that brought himself much before the world ; confessed that he eagerly coveted fame, or if that were not possible, notoriety ; of which latter as he gained far more than seemed his due, the public were incited, not only by their natural love of scandal, but by a special ground of envy, to say whatever ill of him could be said. Out of the fifteen millions that then lived, and had bed and board, in the British Islands, this man has provided us a greater *pleasure* than any other individual, at whose cost we now enjoy ourselves ; perhaps has done us a greater *service* than can be specially attributed to more than two or three : yet, ungrateful that we are, no written or spoken eulogy of James Boswell anywhere exists ; his recompence in solid pudding (so far as copyright went) was not excessive ; and as for the

* *Fraser's Magazine*, 1832.

5. Boswell's Life of Johnson

empty praise, it has altogether been denied him. Men are unwiser than children ; they do *not* know the hand that feeds them.

Boswell was a person whose mean or bad qualities lay open to the general eye ; visible, palpable to the dullest. His good qualities, again, belonged not to the Time he lived in ; were far from common then ; indeed, in such a degree, were almost unexampled ; not recognizable therefore by every one ; nay, apt even (so strange had they grown) to be confounded with the very vices they lay contiguous to, and had sprung out of. That he was a wine-bibber and gross liver ; gluttonously fond of whatever would yield him a little solacement, were it only of a stomachic character, is undeniable enough. That he was vain, heedless, a babbler ; had much of the sycophant, alternating with the braggadocio, curiously spiced too with an all-pervading dash of the coxcomb ; that he gloried much when the Tailor, by a court-suit, had made a new man of him ; that he appeared at the Shakspeare Jubilee with a ribbon, imprinted "CORSICA BOSWELL," round his hat ; and in short, if you will, lived no day of his life without doing and saying more than one pretentious ineptitude ; all this unhappily is evident as the sun at noon. The very look of Boswell

Boswell's Life of Johnson

seems to have signified so much. In that cocked nose, cocked partly in triumph over his weaker fellow-creatures, partly to snuff up the smell of coming pleasure, and scent it from afar ; in those bag-cheeks, hanging like half-filled wine-skins, still able to contain more ; in that coarsely protruded shelf-mouth, that fat dewlapped chin ; in all this, who sees not sensuality, pretension, boisterous imbecility enough ; much that could not have been ornamental in the temper of a great man's overfed great man (what the Scotch name *flunkey*), though it had been more natural there ? The under part of Boswell's face is of a low, almost brutish character.

Unfortunately, on the other hand, what great and genuine good lay in him was no-wise so self-evident. That Boswell was a hunter after spiritual Notabilities, that he loved such, and longed, and even crept and crawled to be near them ; that he first (in old Touchwood Auchinleck's phraseology) " took on with Paoli " ; and then being off with " the Corsican landlouper," took on with a schoolmaster, " ane that kepted a schule, and ca'd it an academy " : that he did all this, and could not help doing it, we account a very singular merit. The man, once for all, had an " open sense," an open loving heart, which

Boswell's Life of Johnson

so few have : where Excellence existed, he was compelled to acknowledge it : was drawn towards it, and (let the old sulphur-brand of a Laird say what he liked) *could not but* walk with it,—if not as superior, if not as equal, then as inferior and lackey, better so than not at all. If we reflect now that this love of Excellence had not only such an evil *nature* to triumph over ; but also what an *education* and social position withstood it and weighed it down, its innate strength, victorious over all these things, may astonish us. Consider what an inward impulse there must have been, how many mountains of impediment hurled aside, before the Scottish Laird could, as humble servant, embrace the knees (the bosom was not permitted him) of the English Domine ! Your Scottish Laird, says an English naturalist of these days, may be defined as the hungriest and vainest of all bipeds yet known. Boswell too was a Tory ; of quite peculiarly feudal, genealogical, pragmatical temper ; had been nurtured in an atmosphere of Heraldry, at the feet of a very Gamaliel in that kind ; within bare walls, adorned only with pedigrees, amid serving-men in threadbare livery ; all things teaching him, from birth upwards, to remember that a Laird was a Laird. Perhaps there was a special vanity

Boswell's Life of Johnson

in his very blood : old Auchinleck had, if not the gay, tail-spreading, peacock vanity of his son, no little of the slow-stalking, contentious, hissing vanity of the gander ; a still more fatal species. Scottish Advocates will yet tell you how the ancient man, having chanced to be the first sheriff appointed (after the abolition of " hereditary jurisdictions ") by royal authority, was wont, in dull-snuffling pompous tone, to preface many a deliverance from the bench with these words : " I, the first King's Sheriff in Scotland."

And now behold the worthy Bozzy, so pre-possessed and held back by nature and by art, fly nevertheless like iron to its magnet, whither his better genius called ! You may surround the iron and the magnet with what enclosures and incumbrances you please,—with wood, with rubbish, with brass : it matters not, the two feel each other, they struggle restlessly towards each other, they *will* be together. The iron may be a Scottish squirelet, full of gulosity and " gigmanity " ; * the magnet an English plebeian, and moving rag-and-dust mountain, coarse, proud, irascible,

* "Q. What do you mean by 'respectable' ? A. He always kept a gig." (*Thurtell's Trial*)—" Thus," it has been said, " does society naturally divided itself into four classes : Noble men, Gentlemen, Gigmen, and Men."

Boswell's Life of Johnson

imperious ; nevertheless, behold how they embrace, and inseparably cleave to one another ! It is one of the strangest phenomena of the past century, that at a time when the old reverent feeling of Discipleship (such as brought men from far countries, with rich gifts, and prostrate soul, to the feet of the Prophets) had passed utterly away from men's practical experience, and was no longer surmised to exist (as it does), perennial, indestructible, in man's inmost heart,—James Boswell should have been the individual, of all others, predestined to recall it, in such singular guise, to the wondering, and, for a long while, laughing and unrecognizing world. It has been commonly said, The man's vulgar vanity was all that attached him to Johnson ; he delighted to be seen near him, to be thought connected with him. Now let it be at once granted that no consideration springing out of vulgar vanity could well be absent from the mind of James Boswell, in this his intercourse with Johnson, or in any considerable transaction of his life. At the same time, ask yourself : Whether such vanity, and nothing else, actuated him therein ; whether this was the true essence and moving principle of the phenomenon, or not rather its outward gesture, and the accidental environment

Boswell's Life of Johnson

(and defacement) in which it came to light ? The man was, by nature and habit, vain ; a sycophant-coxcomb, be it granted : but had there been nothing more than vanity in him, was Samuel Johnson the man of men to whom he must attach himself ? At the date when Johnson was a poor rusty-coated "scholar," dwelling in Temple Lane, and indeed throughout their whole intercourse afterwards, were there not chancellors and prime ministers enough ; graceful gentlemen, the glass of fashion ; honor-giving noblemen ; dinner-giving rich men ; renowned fire-eaters, swords-men ; gowsmen : Quacks and Realities of all hues,—any one of whom bulked much larger in the world's eye than Johnson ever did ? To any one of whom, by half that submissiveness and assiduity, our Bozzy might have recommended himself ; and sat there, the envy of surrounding lickspittles ; pocketing now solid emolument, swallowing now well-cooked viands and wines of rich vintage ; in each case, also, shone on by some glittering reflex of Renown or Notoriety, so as to be the observed of innumerable observers. To no one of whom, however, though otherwise a most diligent solicitor and purveyor, did he so attach himself : such vulgar courtier-ships were his paid drudgery, or leisure

Boswell's Life of Johnson

amusement ; the worship of Johnson was his grand, ideal, voluntary business. Does not the frothy-hearted yet enthusiastic man, doffing his Advocate's wig, regularly take post, and hurry up to London, for the sake of his Sage chiefly ; as to a Feast of Tabernacles, the Sabbath of his whole year ? The plate-licker and wine-bibber dives into Bolt Court, to sip muddy coffee with a cynical old man, and a sour-tempered blind old woman (feeling the cups, whether they are full, with her finger) ; and patiently endures contradictions without end ; too happy so he may but be allowed to listen and live. Nay, it does not appear that vulgar vanity could ever have been much flattered by Boswell's relation to Johnson. Mr. Croker says, Johnson was, to the last, little regarded by the great world ; from which, for a vulgar vanity, all honor, as from its fountain, descends. Bozzy, even among Johnson's friends and special admirers, seems rather to have been laughed at than envied ; his officious, whisking, consequential ways, the daily reproofs and rebuffs he underwent, could gain from the world no golden but only leaden opinions. His devout Discipleship seemed nothing more than a mean Spanielship, in the general eye. His mighty "constellation," or sun, round whom he, as

Boswell's Life of Johnson

satellite, observantly gyrated, was, for the mass of men, but a huge ill-snuffed tallow-light, and he a weak night-moth, circling foolishly, dangerously about it, not knowing what he wanted. If he enjoyed Highland dinners and toasts, as henchman to a new sort of chieftain, Henry Erskine, in the domestic "Outer-House," could hand him a shilling "for the sight of his Bear." Doubtless the man was laughed at, and often heard himself laughed at for his Johnsonism. To be envied is the grand and sole aim of vulgar vanity ; to be filled with good things is that of sensuality : for Johnson perhaps no man living *envied* poor Bozzy ; and of good things (except himself paid for them) there was no vestige in that acquaintanceship. Had nothing other or better than vanity and sensuality been there, Johnson and Boswell had never come together, or had soon and finally separated again.

In fact, the so copious terrestrial dross that welters chaotically, as the outer sphere of this man's character, does but render for us more remarkable, more touching, the celestial spark of goodness, of light and Reverence for Wisdom, which dwelt in the interior, and could struggle through such encumbrances and in some degree illuminate and beautify

Boswell's Life of Johnson

them. There is much lying yet undeveloped in the love of Boswell for Johnson. A cheering proof, in a time which else utterly wanted and still wants such, that living Wisdom is quite *infinitely* precious to man, is the symbol of the Godlike to him, which even weak eyes may discern ; that Loyalty, Discipleship, all that was ever meant by *Hero-worship*, lives perennially in the human bosom, and waits, even in these dead days, only for occasions to unfold it and inspire all men with it and again make the world alive ! James Boswell we can regard as a practical witness, or real *martyr*, to this high, everlasting truth. A wonderful martyr, if you will ; and in a time which made such martyrdom doubly wonderful : yet the time and its martyr perhaps suited each other. For a decrepit, death-sick Era, when CANT had first decisively opened her poison-breathing lips to proclaim that God-worship and Mammon-worship were one and the same, that Life was a *Lie* and the Earth Beelzebub's, which the *Supreme Quack* should inherit ; and so all things were fallen into the yellow leaf and fast hastening to noisome corruption : for such an Era perhaps no better Prophet than a parti-colored Zany-Prophet, concealing from himself and others his prophetic sig-

Boswell's Life of Johnson

the beast, striving more and more to subdue it under his feet ? Did not the Ancients, in their wise, perennially significant way, figure Nature itself, their sacred ALL, or PAN, as a portentous commingling of these two discords ; as musical, humane, oracular in its upper part, yet ending below in the cloven hairy feet of a goat ? The union of melodious, celestial Free-will and Reason with foul Irrationality and Lust, in which nevertheless dwelt a mysterious unspeakable fear and half-mad *panic*. Awe, as for mortals there well might ! And is not man a microcosm, or epitomized mirror of that same Universe; or rather, is not that Universe even Himself, the reflex of his own fearful and wonderful being, "the waste fantasy of his own dream ?" No wonder that man, that each man, and James Boswell like the others, should resemble it ! The peculiarity in his case was the unusual defect of amalgamation and subordination ; the highest lay side by side with the lowest ; not morally combined with it and spiritually transfiguring it, but tumbling in half-mechanical juxtaposition with it, and from time to time, as the mad alteration chanced, irradiating it, or eclipsed by it.

The world, as we have said, has been but unjust to him ; discerning only the outer terres-

Boswell's Life of Johnson

trial and often sordid mass ; without eye, as it generally is, for his inner divine secret ; and thus figuring him nowise as a god Pan, but simply of the bestial species, like the cattle on a thousand hills. Nay, sometimes a strange enough hypothesis has been started of him ; as if it were in virtue even of these same bad qualities that he did his good work ; as if it were the very fact of his being among the worst men in this world that had enabled him to write one of the best books therein ! Falser hypothesis, we may venture to say, never rose in human soul. *Bad* is by its nature negative, and can do *nothing*. Whatsoever enables us to *do* anything is by its very nature *good*. Alas, that there should be teachers in Israel, or even learners, to whom this world-ancient fact is still problematical, or even deniable ! Boswell wrote a good Book because he had a heart and an eye to discern Wisdom, and an utterance to render it forth ; because of his free insight, his lively talent, above all, of his Love and childlike Open-mindedness. His sneaking sycophancies, his greediness and forwardness, whatever was bestial and earthy in him, are so many blemishes in his Book, which still disturb us in its clearness ; wholly hindrances, not helps. Towards Johnson, however, his feeling was not Syco-

Boswell's Life of Johnson

phancy, which is the lowest, but Reverence, which is the highest of human feelings. None but a *reverent* man (which so unspeakably few are) could have found his way from Boswell's environment to Johnson's : if such worship for real God-made superiors showed itself also as worship for apparent Tailor-made superiors, even as hollow interested mouth-worship for such,—the case, in this composite human nature of ours, was not miraculous, the more was the pity ! But for ourselves, let every one of us cling to this last article of Faith, and know it as the beginning of all knowledge worth the name : That neither James Boswell's good Book, nor any other good thing, in any time or in any place, was, is or can be performed by any man in virtue of his *badness*, but always and solely in spite thereof.

As for the Book itself, questionless the universal favor entertained for it is well merited. In worth as a Book we have rated it beyond any other product of the eighteenth century : all Johnson's own Writings, laborious and in their kind genuine above most, stand on a quite inferior level to it ; already, indeed, they are becoming obsolete for this generation ; and for some future generation may be valuable chiefly as Prolegomena and exposi-

Boswell's Life of Johnson

tory Scholia to this *Johnsoniad* of Boswell. Which of us but remembers, as one of the sunny spots in his existence, the day when he opened these airy volumes, fascinating him by a true natural magic ! It was as if the curtains of the Past were drawn aside, and we looked mysteriously into a kindred country, where dwelt our Fathers ; inexpressibly dear to us, but which had seemed forever hidden from our eyes. For the dead Night had engulfed it ; all was gone, vanished as if it had not been. Nevertheless, wondrously given back to us, there once more it lay ; all bright, lucid, blooming ; a little island of Creation amid the circumambient Void. There it still lies ; like a thing stationary, imperishable, over which changeful Time were now accumulating itself in vain, and could not any longer harm it or hide it.

If we examine by what charm it is that men are still held to this *Life of Johnson*, now when so much else has been forgotten, the main part of the answer will perhaps be found in that speculation "on the import of *Reality*," communicated to the world, last month, in this Magazine. The *Johnsoniad* of Boswell turns on objects that in very deed existed ; it is all *true*. So far other in melodiousness of tone, it vies with the *Odyssey*, or surpasses

Boswell's Life of Johnson

it, in this one point : to us these read pages, as those chanted hexameters were to the first Greek hearers, are, in the fullest, deepest sense, wholly *credible*. All the wit and wisdom lying embalmed in Boswell's Book, plenteous as these are, could not have saved it. Far more scientific *instruction* (mere excitement and enlightenment of the *thinking power*) can be found in twenty other works of that time, which make but a quite secondary impression on us. The other works of that time, however, fall under one of two classes : Either they are professedly Didactic ; and, in that way, mere Abstractions, Philosophic Diagrams, incapable of interesting us much otherwise than as *Euclid's Elements* may do : Or else, with all their vivacity, and pictorial richness of color, *they are Fictions and not Realities*. Deep truly, as Herr Sauerteig urges, is the force of this consideration : The thing here stated is a fact ; those figures, that local habitation, are not shadow but substance. In virtue of such advantages, see how a very Boswell may become Poetical !

Critics insist much on the Poet that he should communicate an "Infinitude" to his delineation ; that by intensity of conception, by that gift of "transcendental Thought," which is fitly named *genius*, and inspiration,

Boswell's Life of Johnson

he should *inform* the Finite with a certain Infinitude of significance ; or as they sometimes say, ennable the Actual into Idealness. They are right in their precept ; they mean rightly. But in cases like this of the *Johnsoniad*, such is the dark grandeur of that " Time-element," wherein man's soul here below lives imprisoned,—the Poet's task is, as it were, done to his hand. Time itself, which is the outer veil of Eternity, invests, of its own accord, with an authentic, felt " infinitude " whatsoever it has once embraced in its mysterious folds. Consider all that lies in that one word *Past*! What a pathetic, sacred, in every sense *Poetic*, meaning is implied in it ; a meaning growing ever the clearer, the farther we recede in Time,—the more of that same Past we have to look through!—On which ground indeed must Sauerteig have built, and not without plausibility, in that strange thesis of his : " That History, after all, is the true Poetry ; that Reality, if rightly interpreted, is grander than Fiction ; nay that even in the right interpretation of Reality and History does genuine Poetry consist."

Thus for *Boswell's Life of Johnson* has Time done, is Time still doing, what no ornament of Art or Artifice could have done for

Boswell's Life of Johnson

it. Rough Samuel and sleek wheedling James *were* and *are not*. Their Life and whole personal Environment has melted into air. The Mitre Tavern still stands in Fleet Street: but where now is its scot-and-lot paying, beef-and-ale loving, cocked-hatted, pot-bellied Landlord; its rosy-faced assiduous Landlady, with all her shining brass-pans, waxed tables, well-filled larder-shelves; her cooks, and bootjacks, and errand-boys, and watery-mouthed hangers-on? Gone! Gone! The becking Waiter who, with wreathed smiles, was wont to spread for Samuel and Bozzy their supper of the gods, has long since pocketed his last sixpence; and vanished, sixpences and all, like a ghost at cock-crowing. The Bottles they drank out of are all broken, the Chairs they sat on all rotted and burnt; the very Knives and Forks they ate with have rusted to the heart, and become brown oxide of iron, and mingled with the indiscriminate clay. All, all has vanished; in every deed and truth, like that baseless fabric of Prospero's air-vision. Of the Mitre Tavern nothing but the bare walls remain there: of London, of England, of the World, nothing but the bare walls remain; and these also decaying (were they of adamant), only slower. The mysterious River of Existence

Boswell's Life of Johnson

rushes on : a new Billow thereof has arrived, and lashes wildly as ever round the old embankments ; but the former Billow with *its* loud, mad eddyings where is it ?—Where ! —Now this Book of Boswell's, this is precisely a revocation of the edict of Destiny ; so that Time shall not utterly, not so soon by several centuries, have dominion over us. A little row of Naphtha-lamps, with its line of Naphtha-light, burns clear and holy through the dead Night of the Past : they who are gone are still here ; though hidden they are revealed, though dead they yet speak. There it shines, that little miraculously lamplit Pathway ; shedding its feebler and feebler twilight into the boundless dark Oblivion,—for all that our Johnson *touched* has become illuminated for us : on which miraculous little Pathway we can still travel, and see wonders.

It is not speaking with exaggeration, but with strict measured sobriety, to say that this Book of Boswell's will give us more real insight into the *History of England* during those days than twenty other Books, falsely entitled " Histories," which take to themselves that special aim. What good is it to me though innumerable Smolletts and Belshams keep dinging in my ears that a man named George the Third was born and bred up, and

Boswell's Lite of Johnson

a man named George the Second died ; that Walpole, and the Pelhams, and Chatham, and Rockingham, and Shelburne and North, with their Coalition or their Separation Ministries, all ousted one another ; and vehemently scrambled for "the thing they called the Rudder of Government, but which was in reality the Spigot of Taxation ?" That debates were held, and infinite jarring and jargoning took place ; and road-bills and enclosure-bills, and game-bills and India-bills, and Laws which no man can number, which happily few men needed to trouble their heads with beyond the passing moment, were enacted, and printed by the King's Stationer ? That he who sat in Chancery, and rayed out speculation from the Woolsack, was now a man that squinted, now a man that did not squint ? To the hungry and thirsty mind all this avails next to nothing. These men and these things, we indeed know, did swim, by strength or by specific levity, as apples or as horse-dung, on the top of the current : but is it by painfully noting the courses, eddyings and bobbings hither and thither of such drift-articles, that you will unfold to me the nature of the current itself ; of that mighty-rolling, loud-roaring Life-current, bottomless as the foundations of the Universe, mysterious as its

Boswell's Life of Johnson

Author ! The thing I want to see is not Redbook Lists, and Court Calendars, and Parliamentary Registers, but the LIFE OF MAN in England : what men did, thought, suffered, enjoyed ; the form, especially the spirit, of their terrestrial existence, its outward environment, its inward principle ; *how* and *what* it was ; whence it proceeded, whither it was tending.

To estimate the quantity of Work that Johnson performed, how much poorer the World were had it wanted him, can, as in all such cases, never be accurately done ; cannot, till after some longer space, be approximately done. All work is as seed sown ; it grows and spreads, and sows itself anew, and so, in endless palirgenesis, lives and works. To Johnson's Writings, good and solid, and still profitable as they are, we have already rated his Life and Conversation as superior. By the one and by the other, who shall compute what effects have been produced, and are still, and into deep Time, producing ?

So much, however, we can already see : It is now some three quarters of a century that Johnson has been the Prophet of the English ; the man by whose light the English people, in public and in private, more than by any other man's, have guided their existence. Higher

Boswell's Life of Johnson

light than that immediately *practical* one ; higher virtue than an honest PRUDENCE, he could not then communicate, nor perhaps could they have received : such light, such virtue, however, he did communicate. How to thread this labyrinthic Time, the fallen and falling Ruin of Times ; to silence vain Scruples, hold firm to the last the fragments of old Belief, and with earnest eye still discern some glimpses of a true path, and go forward thereon, "in a world where there is much to be done and little to be known" : this is what Samuel Johnson, by act and word, taught his Nation ; what his Nation received and learned of him, more than of any other. We can view him as the preserver and transmitter of whatsoever was genuine in the spirit of Toryism ; which genuine spirit, it is now becoming manifest, must again embody itself in all new forms of Society, be what they may, that are to exist, and have continuance—elsewhere than on Paper. The *last* in many things, Johnson was the last genuine Tory ; the last of Englishmen who, with strong voice and wholly-believing heart, preached the Doctrine of Standing-still ; who, without selfishness or slavishness, reverenced the existing Powers, and could assert the privileges of rank, though himself poor, neglected and plebeian ; who

Boswell's Life of Johnson

had heart-devoutness with heart-hatred of cant, was orthodox-religious with his eyes open; and in all things and everywhere spoke out in plain English, from a soul wherein Jesuitism could find no harbor, and with the front and tone not of a diplomatist but of a man.

This last of the Tories was Johnson: not Burke, as is often said; Burke was essentially a Whig, and only, on reaching the verge of the chasm towards which Whiggism from the first was inevitably leading, recoiled; and, like a man vehement rather than earnest, a resplendent far-sighted Rhetorician rather than a deep sure Thinker, recoiled with no measure, convulsively, and damaging what he drove back with him.

In a world which exists by the balance of Antagonisms, the respective merit of the Conservator and the Innovator must ever remain debatable. Great, in the mean while, and undoubted for both sides, is the merit of him who, in a day of Change, walks wisely, honestly. 'Johnson's aim was in itself an impossible one: this of stemming the eternal Flood of Time; of clutching all things, and anchoring them down, and saying, Move not!—how could it, or should it, ever have success? The strongest man can but retard the current

Boswell's Life of Johnson

partially and for a short hour. Yet even in such shortest retardation may not an inestimable value lie? If England has escaped the blood-bath of a French Revolution: and may yet, in virtue of this delay and of the experience it has given, work out her deliverance calmly into a new Era, let Samuel Johnson, beyond all contemporary or succeeding men, have the praise for it. We said above that he was appointed to be Ruler of the British Nation for a season: whoso will look beyond the surface, into the heart of the world's movements, may find that all Pitt Administrations, and Continental Subsidies, and Waterloo victories, rested on the possibility of making England, yet a little while, *Toryish*, Loyal to the Old; and this again, on the anterior reality, that the Wise had found such Loyalty still practicable, and recommendable. England had its Hume, as France had its Voltaires and Diderots; but the Johnson was peculiar to us.

If we ask now, by what endowment it mainly was that Johnson realized such a Life for himself and others; what quality of character the main phenomena of his Life may be most naturally deduced from, and his other qualities most naturally subordinated to, in our conception of him, perhaps the answer

Boswell's Life of Johnson

were: The quality of Courage, of Valor; that Johnson was a Brave Man. The Courage that can go forth, once and away, to Chalk-Farm, and have itself shot, and snuffed out, with decency, is nowise wholly what we mean here. Such courage we indeed esteem an exceeding small master; capable of coexisting with a life full of falsehood, feebleness, poltroonery and despicability. Nay oftener it is Cowardice rather that produces the result: for consider, Is the Chalk-Farm Pistoleer inspired with any reasonable Belief and Determination; or is he hounded on by haggard indefinable Fear,—how he will be *cut* at public places, and “plucked geese of the neighborhood” will wag their tongues at him a plucked goose? If he go then, and be shot without shrieking or audible uproar, it is well for him: nevertheless there is nothing amazing in it. Courage to manage all this has not perhaps been denied to any man, or to any woman. Thus, do not recruiting sergeants drum through the streets of manufacturing towns and collect ragged losels enough; every one of whom, if once dressed in red and trained a little, will receive fire cheerfully for the small sum of one shilling *per diem*, and have the soul blown out of him at last, with perfect propriety? The Courage that dares

Boswell's Life of Johnson

only *die* is on the whole no sublime affair : necessary indeed, yet universal ; pitiful when it begins to parade itself. On this Globe of ours there are some thirty-six persons that manifest it, seldom with the smallest failure, during every second of time. Nay look at Newgate : do not the offscourings of Creation, when condemned to the gallows as if they were not men but vermin, walk thither with decency, and even to the scowls and hootings of the whole Universe, give their stern good-night in silence ? 'What is to be undergone only once, we may undergo ; what must be, comes almost of its own accord. Considered as Duellist, what a poor figure does the fiercest Irish Whiskerando make in comparison with any English Game-cock, such as you may buy for fifteenpence !

The Courage we desire and prize is not the Courage to die decently, but to live manfully, This, when by God's grace it has been given, lies deep in the soul ; like genial heat, fosters all other virtues and gifts ; without it they could not live. In spite of our innumerable Waterloos and Peterloos, and such campaigning as there has been, this Courage we allude to, and call the only true one, is perhaps rarer in these last ages than it has been in any other since the Saxon Invasion under

Boswell's Life of Johnson

Hengist. Altogether extinct it can never be among men ; otherwise the species Man were no longer for this world : here and there, in all times, under various guises, men are sent hither not only to demonstrate but exhibit it, and testify, as from heart to heart, that it is still possible, still practicable.

Johnson, in the eighteenth century, and as *Man of Letters*, was one of such ; and, in good truth, “the bravest of the brave.” What mortal could have more to war with ? Yet, as we saw, he yielded not, faltered not ; he fought, and even, such was his blessedness, prevailed. Whoso will understand what it is to have a man’s heart may find that, since the time of John Milton, no braver heart had beat in any English bosom than Samuel Johnson now bore. Observe too that he never called himself brave, never felt himself to be so ; the more completely *was* so. No Giant Despair, no Golgotha Death-dance or Sorcerer’s-Sabbath of “Literary Life in London,” appalls this pilgrim ; he works resolutely for deliverance : in still defiance steps stoutly along. The thing that is given him to do, he can make himself do ; what is to be endured, he can endure in silence.

How the great soul of old Samuel, consuming daily his own bitter unalleviable al-

Boswell's Life of Johnson

lotment of misery and toil, shows beside the poor flimsy little soul of young Boswell ; one day flaunting in the ring of vanity, tarrying by the wine-cup and crying, Aha, the wine is red ; the next day deplored his down-pressed, night-shaded, quite poor estate, and thinking it unkind that the whole movement of the Universe should go on, while *his* digestive apparatus had stopped ! We reckon Johnson's "talent of silence" to be among his great and too rare gifts. Where there is nothing farther to be done, there shall nothing farther be said ; like his own poor blind Welshwoman, he accomplished, somewhat, and also "endured fifty years of wretchedness with unshaken fortitude." How grim was Life to him ; a sick Prison-house and Doubting-castle ! "His great business," he would profess, "was to escape from himself." Yet towards all this he has taken his position and resolution : can dismiss it all "with frigid indifference, having little to hope or to fear." Friends are stupid, and pusillanimous, and parsimonious ; "wearied of his stay, yet offended at his departure" : it is the manner of the world. "By popular delusion," remarks he with a gigantic calmness, "illiterate writers will rise into renown" : it is portion of the History of English Literature ; a per-

Boswell's Life of Johnson

ennial thing, this same popular delusion ; and will—alter the character of the Language.

Closely connected with this quality of Valor, partly as springing from it, partly as protected by it, are the more recognizable qualities of Truthfulness in word and thought, and Honesty in action. There is a reciprocity of influence here : for as the realizing of Truthfulness and Honesty is the life-light and great aim of Valor, so without Valor they cannot, in any wise, be realized. Now, in spite of all practical shortcomings, no one that sees into the significance of Johnson will say that his prime object was not Truth. In conversation, doubtless, you may observe him, on occasion, fighting as if for victory ; — and must pardon these ebulliences of a careless hour, which were not without temptation and provocation. Remark likewise two things ; that such prize-arguings were ever on merely superficial debatable questions ; and then that they were argued generally by the fair laws of battle and logic-fence, by one cunning in that same. If their purpose was excusable, their effect was harmless, perhaps beneficial : that of taming noisy mediocrity, and showing it another side of a debatable matter ; to see *both* sides of which was, for the first time, to see the Truth of it. In his

Boswell's Life of Johnson

Writings themselves are errors enough, crabbed prepossessions enough ; yet these also of a quite extraneous and accidental nature, nowhere a wilful shutting of the eyes to the Truth. Nay, is there not everywhere a heart-felt discernment, singular, almost admirable, if we consider through what confused conflicting lights and hallucinations it had to be attained, of the highest everlasting Truth, and beginning of all Truths : this namely, that man is ever, and even in the age of Wilks and Whitefield, a Revelation of God to man ; and lives, moves and has his being in Truth only ; is either true, or, in strict speech, *is* not at all ?

Quite spotless, on the other hand, is Johnson's love of Truth, if we look at it as expressed in Practice, as what we have named Honesty of action. "Clear your mind of Cant" ; *clear* it, throw Cant utterly away : such was his emphatic, repeated precept ; and did not he himself faithfully conform to it ? The Life of this man has been, as it were, turned inside out, and examined with microscopes by friend and foe ; yet was there no Lie found in him. His Doings and Writings are not *shows* but *performances* : you may weigh them in the balance, and they will stand weight. Not a line, not a sentence is dis-

Boswell's Life of Johnson

honestly done, is other than it pretends to be. Alas ! and he wrote not out of inward inspiration, but to earn his wages : and with that grand perennial tide of " popular delusion " flowing by ; in whose waters he nevertheless refused to fish, to whose rich oyster-beds the dive was too muddy for him. Observe, again, with what innate hatred of Cant, he takes for himself, and offers to others, the lowest possible view of his business, which he followed with such nobleness. Motive for writing he had none, as he often said, but money ; and yet he wrote *so*. Into the region of Poetic Art he indeed never rose : there was no *ideal* without him avowing itself in his work : the nobler was that unavowed *ideal* which lay within him, and commanded saying, Work out thy Artisanship in the spirit of an Artist ! They who talk loudest about the dignity of Art, and fancy that they too are Artistic guild-brethren, and of the Celestials,—let them consider well what manner of man this was, who felt himself to be only a hired day-laborer. A laborer that was worthy of his hire ; that has labored not as an eye-servant, but as one found faithful ! Neither was Johnson in those days perhaps wholly a unique. Time was when, for money, you might have ware ; and needed not, in all departments, in that of the

Boswell's Life of Johnson

Epic Poem, in that of the Blacking-bottle, to rest content with the mere *persuasion* that you had ware. It was a happier time. But as yet the seventh Apocalyptic Bladder (of PUFFERY) had not been rent open,—to whirl and grind, as in a West-Indian Tornado, all earthly trades and things into wreck, and dust, and consummation,—and regeneration. Be it quickly, since it must be!—

That Mercy can dwell only with Valor, is an old sentiment or proposition ; which in Johnson again receives confirmation. Few men on record have had a more merciful, tenderly affectionate nature than old Samuel. He was called the Bear ; and did indeed too often look, and roar, like one ; being forced to it in his own defence : yet within that shaggy exterior of his there beat a heart warm as a mother's, soft as a little child's. Nay generally, his very roaring was but the anger of affection : the rage of a Bear, if you will ; but of a Bear bereaved of her whelps. Touch his Religion, glance at the Church of England, or the Divine Right ; and he was upon you ! These things were his Symbols of all that was good and precious for men ; his very Ark of the Covenant : whoso laid hand on them tore asunder his heart of hearts. Not out of hatred to the opponent, but of

Boswell's Life of Johnson

love to the thing opposed, did Johnson grow cruel, fiercely contradictory : this is an important distinction ; never to be forgotten in our censure of his conversational outrages. But observe also with what humanity, what openness of love, he can attach himself to all things : to a blind old woman, to a Doctor Levett, to a cat "Hodge." "His thoughts in the latter part of his life were frequently employed on his deceased friends ; he often muttered these or such like sentences : 'Poor man ! and then he died.' " How he patiently converts his poor home into a Lazaretto ; endures, for long years, the contradiction of the miserable and unreasonable ; with him unconnected, save that they had no other to yield them refuge ! Generous old man ! Worldly possession he has little ; yet of this he gives freely ; from his own hard-earned shilling, the halfpence for the poor, that "waited his coming out," are not withheld : the poor "waited the coming out" of one not quite so poor ! A Sterne can write sentimentalities on Dead Asses : Johnson has a rough voice ; but he finds the wretched Daughter of Vice fallen down in the streets ; carries her home on his own shoulders, and like a good Samaritan gives help to the help-needing, worthy or unworthy. Ought not Charity,

Boswell's Life of Johnson

even in that sense, to cover a multitude of sins ? No Penny-a-week Committee-Lady, no manager of Soup-Kitchens, dancer at Charity-Balls, was this rugged, stern-visaged man : but where, in all England, could there have been found another soul so full of Pity, a hand so heavenlike bounteous as his ? The widow's mite, we know, was greater than all the other gifts.

Perhaps it is this divine feeling of Affection, throughout manifested, that principally attracts us towards Johnson. A true brother of men is he ; and filial lover of the Earth ; who, with little bright spots of Attachment, "where lives and works some loved one," has beautified this rough solitary Earth into a peopled garden." Lichfield, with its mostly dull and limited inhabitants, is to the last one of the sunny islets for him : *Salve magna parens !* Or read those Letters on his Mother's death ; what a genuine solemn grief and pity lies recorded there ; a looking back into the Past, unspeakably mournful, unspeakably tender. And yet calm, sublime for he must now act, not look : his venerated Mother has been taken from him ; but he must now write a *Rasselas* to defray her funeral ! Again in this little incident, recorded in his Book of Devotion, are not the tones of sacred

Boswell's Life of Johnson

Sorrow and Greatness deeper than in many a blank-verse Tragedy ;—as, indeed, “the fifth act of a Tragedy,” though unrhymed, does “lie in every death-bed, were it a peasant’s, and of straw :”

“Sunday, October 18, 1767. Yesterday, at about ten in the morning, I took my leave forever of my dear old friend, Catherine Chambers, who came to live with my mother about 1724, and has been but little parted from us since. She buried my father, my brother and my mother. She is now fifty-eight years old.

“I desired all to withdraw ; then told her that we were to part forever ; that as Christians, we should part with prayer ; and that I would, if she was willing, say a short prayer beside her. She expressed great desire to hear me ; and held up her poor hands as she lay in bed, with great fervor, while I prayed kneeling by her. . . .

“I then kissed her. She told me that to part was the greatest pain she had ever felt, and that she hoped we should meet again in a better place. I expressed, with swelled eyes and great emotion of tenderness, the same hopes. We kissed and parted ; I humbly hope, to meet again, and to part no more.”

Boswell's Life of Johnson

Tears trickling down the granite rock : a soft well of Pity springs within !—Still more tragical is this other scene : "Johnson mentioned that he could not in general accuse himself of having been an undutiful son. 'Once, indeed,' said he, 'I was disobedient : I refused to attend my father to Uttoxeter market. Pride was the source of that refusal, and the remembrance of it was painful. A few years ago I desired to atone for this fault.' " —But by what method ?—What method was now possible ? Hear it : the words are again given as his own, though here evidently by a less capable reporter :—

" Madam, I beg your pardon for the abruptness of my departure in the morning, but I was compelled to it by conscience. Fifty years ago, Madam, on this day, I committed a breach of filial piety. My father had been in the habit of attending Uttoxeter market, and opening a stall there for the sale of his Books. Confined by indisposition, he desired me, that day, to go and attend the stall in his place. My pride prevented me ; I gave my father a refusal.—And now to-day I have been at Uttoxeter ; I went into the market at the time of business, uncovered my head, and stood with it bare, for an hour, on the spot where my father's stall used to stand. In

Boswell's Life of Johnson

contrition I stood, and I hope the penance was expiatory."

Who does not figure to himself this spectacle, amid the "rainy weather, and the sneers" or wonder, "of the bystanders?" The memory of old Michael Johnson, rising from the far distance; sad-beckoning in the "moonlight of memory:" how he had toiled faithfully hither and thither: patiently among the lowest of the low; been buffeted and beaten down, yet ever risen again, ever tried it anew—And oh, when the wearied old man, as Bookseller, or Hawker, or Tinker, or whatsoever it was that Fate had reduced him to, begged help of *thee* for one day,—how savage, diabolic, was that mean Vanity, which answered, No! He sleeps now: after life's fitful fever, he sleeps well: but thou, O Merciless, how now wilt thou still the sting of that remembrance?—The picture of Samuel Johnson standing bareheaded in the market there, is one of the grandest and saddest we can paint. Repentance! Repentance! he proclaims, as with passionate sobs: but only to the ear of Heaven, if Heaven will give him audience; the earthly ear and heart, that should have heard it, are now closed, unresponsive forever.

That this so keen-loving, soft-trembling Af-

Boswell's Life of Johnson

fectionateness, the inmost essence of his being, must have looked forth, in one form or another, through Johnson's whole character, practical and intellectual, modifying both, is not to be doubted. Yet through what singular distortions and superstitions, moping melancholies, blind habits, whims about "entering with the right foot," and "touching every post as he walked along;" and all the other mad chaotic lumber of a brain that, with sun-clear intellect, hovered forever on the verge of insanity,—must that same inmost essence have looked forth; unrecognizable to all but the most observant! Accordingly it was not recognized; Johnson passed not for a fine nature, but for a dull, almost brutal one. Might not, for example, the first-fruit of such a Lovingness, coupled with his quick Insight, have been expected to be a peculiarly courteous demeanor as man among men? In Johnson's "Politeness," which he often, to the wonder of some, asserted to be great, there was indeed somewhat that needed explanation. Nevertheless, if he insisted always on handing lady-visitors to their carriage: though with the certainty of collecting a mob of gazers in Fleet Street,—as might well be, the beau having on, by way of court-dress, "his rusty brown morning suit, a pair of old

Boswell's Life of Johnson

shoes for slippers, a little shriveled wig sticking on the top of his head, and the sleeves of his shirt and the knees of his breeches hanging loose :"—in all this we can see the spirit of true politeness, only shining through a strange medium. Thus again, in his apartments at one time there were unfortunately no chairs. "A gentleman, who frequently visited him whilst writing his *Idlers*, constantly found him at his desk, sitting on one with three legs : and on rising from it, he remarked that Johnson never forgot its defect ; but would either hold it in his hand, or place it with great composure against some support : taking no notice of its imperfection to his visitor,"—who meanwhile, we suppose, sat upon folios, or in the sartorial fashion. "It was remarkable in Johnson," continues Miss Reynolds (*Renny dear*), "that no external circumstances ever prompted him to make any apology, or to seem even sensible of their existence. Whether this was the effect of philosophic pride, or of some partial notion of his respecting high-breeding, is doubtful." That it *was*, for one thing, the effect of genuine Politeness, is nowise doubtful. Not of the Pharisaical Brummelian Politeness, which would suffer crucifixion rather than ask twice for soup : but the noble uni-

Boswell's Life of Johnson

versal Politeness of a man that knows the dignity of men, and feels his own ; such as may be seen in the patriarchal bearing of an Indian Sachem ; such as Johnson himself exhibited, when a sudden change brought him into dialogue with his King. To us, with our view of the man, it nowise appears "strange" that he should have boasted himself cunning in the laws of Politeness ; nor "stranger still," habitually attentive to practise them.

More legibly is this influence of the Loving heart to be traced in his intellectual character. What, indeed, is the beginning of intellect, the first inducement to the exercise thereof, but attraction towards somewhat, *affection* for it ? Thus too, whoever saw, or will see, any true talent, not to speak of genius, the foundation of which is not goodness, love ? From Johnson's strength of Affection we deduce many of his intellectual peculiarities ; especially that threatening array of perversions, known under the name of "Johnson's Prejudices." Looking well into the root from which these sprang, we have long ceased to view them with hostility, can pardon and reverently pity them. Consider with what force early-imbibed opinions must have clung to a soul of his Affection. Those evil-famed Prejudices of his, that Jacobitism, Church-of-Eng-

Boswell's Life of Johnson

landism, hatred of the Scotch, belief in Witches, and such like, what were they but the ordinary beliefs of well-doing, well-meaning provincial Englishmen in that day ? First gathered by his Father's hearth ; round the kind "country fires" of native Staffordshire ; they grew with his growth and strengthened with his strength : they were hallowed by fondest sacred recollections ; to part with them was parting with his heart's blood. If the man who has no strength of Affection, strength of Belief, have no strength of Prejudice, let him thank Heaven for it, but to himself take small thanks.

Melancholy it was, indeed, that the noble Johnson could not work himself loose from these adhesions ; that he could only purify them, and wear them with some nobleness. Yet let us understand how they grew out from the very center of his being : nay moreover, how they came to adhere in him with what formed the business and worth of his Life, the sum of his whole Spiritual Endeavor. For it is on the same ground that he became throughout an Edifier and Repairer, not, as the others of his make were, a Puller-down ; that in an age of universal Skepticism, England was still to produce its Believer. Mark too his conduct even here : while a Dr. Adams, with

Boswell's Life of Johnson

placid surprise, asks, "Have we not evidence enough of the soul's immortality?" Johnson answers, "I wish for more."

But the truth is, in Prejudice, as in all things, Johnson was the product of England; one of those *good* yeomen whose limbs were made in England; alas, the last of *such* Invincibles, their day being now done! His culture is wholly English; that not of a Thinker but of a "Scholar:" his interests are wholly English; he sees and knows nothing but England; he is the John Bull of Spiritual Europe; let him live, love him, as he was and could not but be! Pitiable it is, no doubt, that a Samuel Johnson must confute Hume's irreligious Philosophy by some "story from a Clergyman of the Bishopric of Durham:" should see nothing in the great Frederick but "Voltaire's lackey;" in Voltaire himself but a man *acerrimi ingenii, paucarum literarum;* in Rousseau but one worthy to be hanged; and in the universal, long-prepared, inevitable "Tendency of European Thought" but a green-sick milkmaid's crotchet of, for variety's sake, "milking the Bull." Our good, dear John! Observe too what it is that he sees in the city of Paris: no feeblest glimpse of those D'Alemberts and Diderots, or of the strange questionable work they did;

Boswell's Life of Johnson

solely some Benedictine Priests, to talk kitchen-latin with them about *Editiones Principes*. “*Monsheer Nongtongpaw!*”—Our dear, foolish John : yet is there a lion’s heart within him !—Pitiable all these things were, we say, yet nowise inexcusable ; nay, as basis or as foil to much else that was in Johnson, almost venerable. Ought we not, indeed, to honor England, and English Institutions and Ways of Life, that they could still equip such a man ; could furnish him in heart and head to be a Samuel Johnson, and yet to love them, and unyieldingly fight for them ? What truth and living vigor must such Institutions once have had, when, in the middle of the Eighteenth Century, there was still enough left in them for this.

It is worthy of note that, in our little British Isle, the two grand Antagonisms of Europe should have stood embodied, under their very highest concentration, in two men produced simultaneously among ourselves. Samuel Johnson and David Hume, as was observed, were children nearly of the same year : through life they were spectators of the same Life-movements ; often inhabitants of the same city. Greater contrast, in all things, between two great men, could not be. Hume, well-born, competently provided for,

Boswell's Life of Johnson

whole in body and mind, of his own determination forces a way into Literature : Johnson, poor, moonstruck, diseased, forlorn, is forced into it "with the bayonet of necessity at his back." And what a part did they severally play there ! As Johnson became the father of all succeeding Tories ; so was Hume the father of all succeeding Whigs, for his own Jacobitism was but an accident, as worthy to be named Prejudice as any of Johnson's. Again, if Johnson's culture was exclusively English ; Hume's, in Scotland, became European ;—for which reason too we find his influence spread deeply over all quarters of Europe, traceable deeply in all speculation, French, German, as well as domestic ; while Johnson's name, out of England, is hardly anywhere to be met with. In spiritual stature they are almost equal ; both great, among the greatest : yet how unlike in likeness ! Hume has the widest, methodizing, comprehensive eye ; Johnson the keenest for perspicacity and minute detail : so had, perhaps chiefly, their education ordered it. Neither of the two rose into Poetry ; yet both to some approximation thereof : Hume to something of an Epic clearness and method, as in his delineation of the Commonwealth Wars ; Johnson to many

Boswell's Life of Johnson

a deep Lyric tone of plaintiveness and impetuous graceful power, scattered over his fugitive compositions. Both, rather to the general surprise, had a certain rugged Humor shining through their earnestness : the indication, indeed, that they *were* earnest men, and had *subdued* their wild world into a kind of temporary home and safe dwelling. Both were, by principle and habit, Stoicks : yet Johnson with the greater merit, for he alone had very much to triumph over ; farther, he alone ennobled his Stoicism into Devotion. To Johnson Life was as a Prison, to be endured with heroic faith ; to Hume it was little more than a foolish Bartholomew-Fair Show-booth, with the foolish crowdings and elbowings of which it was not worth while to quarrel ; the whole would break up, and be at liberty, so *soon*. Both realized the highest task of Manhood, that of living like men ; each died not unfitly, in his way : Hume as one, with factitious, half-false gayety, taking leave of what was itself wholly but a Lie : Johnson as one, with awe-struck, yet resolute and piously expectant heart, taking leave of a Reality, to enter a Reality still higher. Johnson had the harder problem of it, from first to last : whether, with some hesitation, we can admit that he was intrinsi-

Boswell's Life of Johnson

cally the better-gifted, may remain undecided.

These two men now rest ; the one in Westminster Abbey here ; the other in the Calton-Hill Churchyard of Edinburgh. Through Life they did not meet : as contrasts, "like in unlike," love each other ; so might they two have loved, and communed kindly,—had not the terrestrial dross and darkness that was in them withheld ! One day, their spirits, what Truth was in each, will be found working, living in harmony and free union, even here below. They were the two half-men of their time : whoso should combine the intrepid Candor and decisive scientific Clearness of Hume, with the Reverence, the Love and devout Humility of Johnson, were the whole man of a new time. Till such whole man arrive for us, and the distracted time admit of such, might the Heavens but bless poor England with half-men worthy to tie the shoe-latchets of these, resemble these even from afar ! Be both attentively regarded, let the true Effort of both prosper ; —and for the present, both take our affectionate farewell !

Coleridge*

COLERIDGE sat on the brow of Highgate Hill, in those years, looking down on London and its smoke-tumult, like a sage escaped from the inanity of life's battle ; attracting towards him the thoughts of innumerable brave souls still engaged there. His express contributions to poetry, philosophy, or any specific province of human literature or enlightenment, had been small and sadly intermittent ; but he had, especially among young inquiring men, a higher than literary, a kind of prophetic or magician character. He was thought to hold, he alone in England, the key of German and other Transcendentalisms ; knew the sublime secret of believing by "the reason" what "the understanding" had been obliged to fling out as incredible ; and could still, after Hume and Voltaire had done their best and worst with him, profess himself an orthodox Christian, and say and print to the Church of England, with its singular old rubrics and surplices at Allhollowtide, *Esto perpetua*. A sublime man ; who, alone in

* *Life of Sterling*, part i., chap. viii.

Coleridge

those dark days, had saved his crown of spiritual manhood ; escaping from the black materialisms, and revolutionary deluges, with "God, Freedom, Immortality" still his : a king of men. The practical intellects of the world did not much heed him, or carelessly reckoned him a metaphysical dreamer ; but to the rising spirits of the young generation he had this dusky sublime character ; and sat there as a kind of *Magus*, girt in mystery and enigma ; his Dodona oak-grove (Mr. Gilman's house at Highgate) whispering strange things, uncertain whether oracles or jargon.

The Gilmans did not encourage much company, or excitation of any sort, round their sage ; nevertheless access to him, if a youth did reverently wish it, was not difficult. He would stroll about the pleasant garden with you, sit in the pleasant rooms of the place,— perhaps take you to his own peculiar room, high up, with a rearward view, which was the chief view of all. A really charming outlook, in fine weather. Close at hand, wide sweep of flowery leafy gardens, their few houses mostly hidden, the very chimney-pots veiled under blossomy umbrage, flowed gloriously down hill : gloriously issuing in wide-tufted undulating plain-country, rich in all charms of field and town. Waving blooming

Coleridge

country of the brightest green ; dotted all over with handsome villas, handsome groves ; crossed by roads and human traffic, here inaudible or heard only as a musical hum : and behind all swam, under olive-tinted haze, the illimitable limitary ocean of London, with its domes and steeples definite in the sun, big Paul's and the many memories attached to it hanging high over all. Nowhere, of its kind, could you see a grander prospect on a bright summer day, with the set of the air going southward,—southward, and so draping with the city-smoke not *you* but the city. Here for hours would Coleridge talk, concerning all conceivable or inconceivable things ; and liked nothing better than to have an intelligent, or failing that, even a silent and patient human listener. He distinguished himself to all that ever heard him as at least the most surprising talker extant in this world,—and to some small minority, by no means to all, as the most excellent.

The good man, he was now getting old, towards sixty perhaps ; and give you the idea of a life that had been full of sufferings ; a life heavy-laden, half-vanquished, still swimming painfully in seas of manifold physical and other bewilderment. Brow and head were round, and of massive weight, but the

Coleridge

face was flabby and irresolute. The deep eyes, of a light hazel, were as full of sorrow as of inspiration ; confused pain looked mildly from them, as in a kind of mild astonishment. The whole figure and air, good and amiable otherwise, might be called flabby and irresolute ; expressive of weakness under possibility of strength. He hung loosely on his limbs, with knees bent, and stooping attitude ; in walking, he rather shuffled than decisively stepped ; and a lady once remarked, he never could fix which side of the garden walk would suit him best, but continually shifted, in cork-screw fashion, and kept trying both. A heavy-laden, high-aspiring and surely much suffering man. His voice, naturally soft and good, had contracted itself into a plaintive shuffle and singsong ; he spoke as if preaching—you would have said preaching earnestly and also hopelessly the weightiest things. I still recollect his “ object ” and “ subject,” terms of continual recurrence in the Kantean province ; and how he sang and snuffled them into “ om-m-mject,” and “ sum-m-mject,” with a kind of solemn shake or quaver, as he rolled along. No talk, in his century or in any other, could be more surprising.

Sterling, who assiduously attended him, with profound reverence, and was often with

Coleridge

him by himself, for a good many months, gives a record of their first colloquy.* Their colloquies were numerous, and he had taken note of many ; but they are all gone to the fire, except this first, which Mr. Hare has printed,—unluckily without date. It contains a number of ingenious, true and half-true observations, and is of course a faithful epitome of the things said ; but it gives small idea of Coleridge's way of talking ;—this one feature is perhaps the most recognizable, “Our interview lasted for three hours, during which he talked two hours and three quarters.” Nothing could be more copious than his talk ; and furthermore it was always, virtually or literally, of the nature of a monologue ; suffering no interruption, however reverent ; hastily putting aside all foreign additions, annotations, or most ingenuous desires for elucidation, as well-meant superfluities which would never do. Besides, it was talk not flowing any-whither like a river, but spreading everywhither in inextricable currents and regurgitations like a lake or sea ; terribly deficient in definite goal or aim, nay, often in logical intelligibility ; *what* you were to believe or do, on any earthly or heavenly thing, obstinately refusing to appear from it. So that,

* *Biography*, by Hare, pp. xvi-xxvi.

Coleridge

most times, you felt logically lost ; swamped near to drowning in this tide of ingenious vocables, spreading out boundless as if to submerge the world.

To sit as a passive bucket and be pumped into, whether you consent or not, can in the long run be exhilarating to no creature ; how eloquent soever the flood of utterance that is descending. But if it be withal a confused unintelligible flood of utterance, threatening to submerge all known landmarks of thought, and drown the world and you !—I have heard Coleridge talk, with eager musical energy, two stricken hours, his face radiant and moist, and communicate no meaning whatsoever to any individual of his hearers,—certain of whom, I for one, still kept eagerly listening in hope ; the most had long before given up, and formed (if the room were large enough) secondary humming groups of their own. He began anywhere : you put some question to him, made some suggestive observation : instead of answering this, or decidedly setting out towards answer of it, he would accumulate formidable apparatus, logical swim-bladders, transcendental life-preservers and other precautionary and vehicular gear, for setting out ; perhaps did at last get under way, —but was swiftly solicited, turned aside by the

Coleridge.

glance of some radiant new game on this hand or that, into new courses ; and ever into new ; and before long into all the Universe, where it was uncertain what game you would catch, or whether any.

His talk, alas, was distinguished, like himself, by irresolution : it disliked to be troubled with conditions, abstinences, definite fulfilments ;—love to wander at its own sweet will, and make its auditor and his claims and humble wishes a mere passive bucket for itself ! He had knowledge about many things and topics, much curious reading ; but generally all topics led him, after a pass or two, into the high seas of theosophic philosophy, the hazy infinitude of Kantean transcendentalism, with its “sum-m-mjects” and “om-m-mjects.” Sad enough ; for with such indolent impatience of the claims and ignorances of others, he had not the least talent for explaining this or anything unknown to them ; and you swam and fluttered in the mistiest wide unintelligible deluge of things, for most part in a rather profitless uncomfortable manner.

Glorious islets, too, I have seen rise out of the haze ; but they were few, and soon swallowed in the general element again. Balmy sunny islets, islets of the blest and the intelligible : —on which occasions those secondary hum-

Coleridge

ming groups would all cease humming, and hang breathless upon the eloquent words ; till once your islet got wrapt in the mist again, and they could recommence humming. Eloquent artistically expressive words you always had ; piercing radiances of a most subtle insight came at intervals ; tones of noble pious sympathy, recognizable as pious though strangely colored, were never wanting long : but in general you could not call this aimless, cloud-capt, cloud-based, lawlessly meandering human discourse of reason by the name of "excellent talk," but only of "surprising ;" and were reminded bitterly of Hazlitt's account of it : "Excellent talker, very,—if you let him start from no premises and come to no conclusion." Coleridge was not without what talkers call wit, and there were touches of prickly sarcasm in him, contemptuous enough of the world and its idols and popular dignitaries ; he had traits even of poetic humor : but in general he seemed deficient in laughter ; or indeed in sympathy for concrete human things either on the sunny or on the stormy side. One right peal of concrete laughter at some convicted flesh-and-blood absurdity, one burst of noble indignation at some injustice or depravity, rubbing elbows with us on this solid Earth, how strange

Coleridge

would it have been in that Kantean haze-world, and how infinitely cheering amidst its vacant air-castles and dim-melting ghosts and shadows ! None such ever came. His life had been an abstract thinking and dreaming, idealistic, passed amid the ghosts of defunct bodies and of unborn ones. The moaning sing-song of that theosophico-metaphysical monotony left on you, at last, a very dreary feeling.

In close colloquoy, flowing within narrower banks, I suppose he was more definite and apprehensible : Sterling in after-times did not complain of his unintelligibility, or imputed it only to the abtruse high nature of the topics handled. Let us hope so, let us try to believe so ! There is no doubt but Coleridge could speak plain words on things plain ; his observations and responses on the trivial matters that occurred were as simple as the commonest man's or were even distinguished by superior simplicity as well as pertinency. "Ah, your tea is too cold, Mr. Coleridge !" mourned the good Mrs. Gilman once, in her kind, reverential and yet protective manner, handing him a very tolerable though belated cup. —"It's better than I deserve !" snuffled he, in a low hoarse murmur, partly courteous, chiefly pious, the tone of which till abides with me : "It's better than I deserve !"

Coleridge

But indeed, to the young ardent mind, instinct with pious nobleness, yet driven to the grim deserts of Radicalism for a faith, his speculations had a charm much more than literary, a charm almost religious and prophetic. The constant gist of his discourse was lamentation over the sunk condition of the world ; which he recognized to be given up to Atheism and Materialism, full of mere sordid misbeliefs, mispursuits and misresults. All Science had become mechanical ; the science not of men, but of a kind of human beavers. Churches themselves had died away into a godless mechanical condition ; and stood there as mere Cases of Articles, mere Forms of Churches ; like the dried carcasses of once swift camels, which you find left withering in the thirst of the universal desert, —ghastly portents for the present, beneficent ships of the desert no more. Men's souls were blinded, hebetated ; and sunk under the influence of Atheism and Materialism, and Hume and Voltaire ; the world for the present was as an extinct world, deserted of God, and incapable of well-doing till it changed its heart and spirit. This, expressed I think with less of indignation and with more of long-drawn querulousness, was always recognizable as the ground-tone : in which truly a

Coleridge

pious young heart, driven into Radicalism and the opposition party, could not but recognize a too sorrowful truth ; and ask of the Oracle, with all earnestness, What remedy, then ?

The remedy, though Coleridge himself professed to see it as in sunbeams, could not except by processes unspeakably difficult, be described to you at all. On the whole, those dead Churches, this dead English Church especially, must be brought to life again. Why not ? It was not dead ; the soul of it, in this parched-up body, was tragically asleep only. Atheistic Philosophy was true on its side, and Hume and Voltaire could on their own ground speak irrefragibly for themselves against any Church ; but lift the Church and them into a higher sphere of argument, *they* died into inanition, the Church revivified itself into pristine florid vigor,—became once more a living ship of the desert, and invincibly bore you over stock and stone. But how, but how ! By attending to the “ reason ” of man, said Coleridge, and duly chaining up the “ understanding ” of man : the *Vernunft* (Reason) and *Verstand* (Understanding) of the Germans, it all turned upon these, if you could well understand them,—which you couldn’t. For the rest, Mr. Coleridge had on the anvil various

Coleridge

Books, especially was about to write one grand Book *On the Logos*, which would help to bridge the chasm for us. So much appeared, however: Churches, though proved false (as you had imagined), were still true (as you were to imagine): here was an Artist who could burn you up an old Church, root and branch; and then as the Alchemists professed to do with organic substances in general, distil you an "Astral Spirit" from the ashes, which was the very image of the old burnt article, its air-drawn counterpart,—this you still had, or might get, and draw uses from, if you could. Wait till the Book on the Logos were done;—alas, till your own terrene eyes, blind with conceit and the dust of logic, were purged, subtilized and spiritualized into the sharpness of vision requisite for discerning such an "om-m-mject."—The ingenious young English head, of those days, stood strangely puzzled by such revelations; uncertain whether it were getting inspired, or getting infatuated into flat imbecility; and strange effulgence, of new day or else of deeper meteoric night, colored the horizon of the future for it.

Let me not be unjust to this memorable man. Surely there was here, in his pious, ever-laboring, subtle mind, a precious truth, or prefiguration of truth; and yet a fatal

Coleridge

delusion withal. Prefigurement that, in spite of beaver sciences and temporary spiritual hebetude and cecity, man and his Universe were eternally divine; and that no past nobleness, or revelation of the divine, could or would ever be lost to him. Most true, surely, and worthy of all acceptance. Good also to do what you can with old Churches and practical Symbols of the Noble : nay quit not the burnt ruins of them while you find there is still gold to be dug there. But, on the whole, do not think you can, by logical alchemy, distil astral spirits from them; or if you could, that said astral spirits, or defunct logical phantasms, could serve you in anything. What the light of your mind, which is the direct inspiration of the Almighty, pronounces incredible,—that, in God's name, leave uncredited ; at your peril do not try believing that. No subtlest hocus-pocus of " reason " *versus* " understanding " will avail for that feat ;—and it is terribly perilous to try it in these provinces !

The truth is, I now see, Coleridge's talk and speculation was the emblem of himself: in it as in him, a ray of heavenly inspiration struggled, in a tragically ineffectual degree, with the weakness of flesh and blood. He says once, he " had skirted the howling des-

Coleridge

erts of Infidelity ; " this was evident enough, but he had not had the courage, in defiance of pain and terror, to press resolutely across said deserts to the new firm lands of Faith beyond ; he preferred to create logical fata-morganas for himself on this hither side, and laboriously solace himself with these.

To the man himself Nature had given, in high measure, the seeds of a noble endowment ; and to unfold it had been forbidden him. A subtle lynx-eyed intellect, tremulous pious sensibility to all good and all beautiful ; truly a ray of empyrean light ;—but embedded in such weak laxity of character, in such indolences and esuriences as had made strange work with it. Once more, the tragic story of a high endowment with an insufficient will. An eye to discern the divineness of the Heaven's spendors and lightnings, the insatiable wish to revel in their godlike radiances and brilliances ; but no heart to front the scathing terrors of them, which is the first condition of your conquering an abiding place there. The courage necessary for him, above all things, had been denied this man. His life, with such ray of the empyrean in it, was great and terrible to him ; and he had not valiantly grappled with it, he had fled from it ; sought refuge in vague day-dreams, hollow

Coleridge

compromises, in opium, in theosophic metaphysics. Harsh pain, danger, necessity, slavish harnessed toil, were of all things abhorrent to him. And so the empyrean element, lying smothered under the terrene, and yet inextinguishable there, made sad writhings. For pain, danger, difficulty, steady slaving toil, and other highly disagreeable behests of destiny, shall in nowise be shirked by any brightest mortal that will approve himself loyal to his mission in this world ; nay precisely the higher he is, the deeper will be the disagreeableness, and the detestability to flesh and blood, of the tasks laid on him ; and the heavier too, and more tragic, his penalties if he neglect them.

For the old Eternal Powers do live forever ; nor do their laws know any change, however we in our poor wigs and church-tippets may attempt to read their laws. To *steal* into Heaven,—by the modern method, of sticking ostrich-like your head into fallacies on Earth, equally as by the ancient and by all conceivable methods,—is forever forbidden. High-treason is the name of that attempt ; and it continues to be punished as such. Strange enough : here once more was a kind of Heaven-scaling Ixion ; and to him, as to the old one, the just gods were very stern ! The

Coleridge

ever-revolving, never-advancing Wheel (of a kind) was his, through life; and from his Cloud-Juno did not he too procreate strange Centaurs, spectral Puseyisms, monstrous illusory Hybrids, and ecclesiastical Chimeras,—which now roam the earth in a very lamentable manner!

Mirabeau*

WHICH of these Six Hundred individuals, in plain white cravat, that have come up to regenerate France, might one guess would become their *king*? For a king or leader they, as all bodies of men, must have : be their work what it may, there is one man there who, by character, faculty, position, is fittest of all to do it ; that man, as future not yet elected king, walks there among the rest. He with the thick black locks, will it be ? With the *hure*, as himself calls it, or black *boar's-head*, fit to be "shaken" as a senatorial portent? Through whose shaggy beetle-brows, and rough-hewn, seamed, carbuncled face, there look natural ugliness, small-pox, incontinence, bankruptcy,—and burning fire of genius ; like comet-fire glaring fuliginous through murkiest confusions ? It is *Gabriel Honore Riquetti de Mirabeau*, the world-compeller ; man-ruling Deputy of Aix ! According to the Baroness de Staël, he steps proudly along, though looked at askance here ; and

* *The French Revolution*, book iv., chap. iv.

Mirabeau

shakes his black *chevelure*, or lion's-manè; as if prophetic of great deeds.

Yes, Reader, that is the Type-Frenchman of this epoch ; as Voltaire was of the last. He is French in his aspirations, acquisitions, in his virtues, in his vices ; perhaps more French than any other man ;—and intrinsically such a mass of manhood too. Mark him well. The National Assembly were all different without that one ; nay, he might say with the old Despot : “The National Assembly ! I am that.”

Of a southern climate, of wild southern blood : for the Riquettis, or Arrighettis, had to fly from Florence and the Guelfs, long centuries ago, and settled in Provence ; where from generation to generation they have ever approved themselves a peculiar kindred : irascible, indomitable, sharp-cutting, true, like the steel they wore ; of an intensity and activity that sometimes verged towards madness, yet did not reach it. One ancient Riquetti, in mad fulfilment of a mad vow, chains two Mountains together ; and the chain, with its “iron star of five rays,” is still to be seen. May not a modern Riquetti unchain so much, and set it drifting,—which also shall be seen ?

Destiny has work for that swart burly.

Mirabeau

headed Mirabeau ; Destiny has watched over him, prepared him from afar. Did not his Grandfather, stout *Col-d'Argent* (Silver-Stock, so they named him), shattered and slashed by seven-and-twenty wounds in one fell day, lie sunk together on the Bridge at Casano ; while Prince Eugene's cavalry galloped and regalloped over him,—only the flying sergeant had thrown a camp-kettle over that loved head ; and Vendô me, dropping his spyglass, moaned out, “ Mirabeau is *dead*, then ! ” Nevertheless he was not dead : he awoke to breath, and miraculous surgery ; —for Gabriel was yet to be. With his *silver-stock* he kept his scarred head erect, through long years ; and wedded ; and produced tough Marquis Victor, the *Friend of Men*. Whereby at last in the appointed year 1749, this long-expected rough-hewn Gabriel Honoré did likewise see the light : roughest lion's-whelp ever littered of that rough breed. How the old lion (for our old Marquis too was lion-like, most unconquerable, kingly-genial, most perverse) gazed wondering on his offspring ; and determined to train him as no lion had yet been ! It is in vain, O Marquis ! This cub, though thou slay him and flay him, will not learn to draw in dogcart of Political Economy, and be a *Friend of Men* ;

Mirabeau

he will not be Thou, but must and will be Himself, another than Thou. Divorce law-suits, “whole family save one in prison, and threescore *Lettres-de-Cachet*” for thy own sole use, do but astonish the world.

Our luckless Gabriel, sinned against and sinning, has been in the Isle of Rhé, and heard the Atlantic from his tower, in the Castle of It, and heard the Mediterranean at Marseilles. He has been in the Fortress of Joux; and forty-two months, with hardly clothing to his back, in the Dungeon of Vincennes :—all by *Lettre-de-Cachet*, from his lion father. He has been in Pontarlier Jails (self-constituted prisoner); was noticed fording estuaries of the sea (at low water), in flight from the face of men. He has pleaded before Aix Parlements (to get back his wife): the public gathering on roofs, to see since they could not hear: “the clatter-teeth (*claque-dents*)!” snarls singular old Mirabeau ; discerning in such admired forensic eloquence nothing but two clattering jawbones, and a head vacant, sonorous, of the drum species.

But as for Gabriel Honoré in these strange wayfarings, what has he not seen and tried ! From drill-sergeants, to prime-ministers, to foreign and domestic booksellers, all manner of men he has seen. All manner of men he

Mirabeau

has gained ; for at bottom it is a social, loving heart, that wild unconquerable one :—more especially all manner of women. From the Archer's Daughter at Saintes to that fair young Sophie Madame Monnier, whom he could not but "steal," and be beheaded for—in effigy ! For indeed hardly since the Arabian Prophet lay dead to Ali's admiration, was there seen such a Love-hero, with the strength of thirty men. In War, again he has helped to conquer Corsica ; fought duels, irregular brawls ; horsewhipped calumnious barons. In Literature, he has written on *Despotism*, on *Lettres-de-Cachet*; Erotics Sapphic-Werterean, Obscenities, Profanities ; Books on the *Prussian Monarchy*, on *Cagliostro*, on *Calonne*, on the Water-Companies of Paris :—each Book comparable, we will say, to a bituminous alarum-fire ; huge, smoky, sudden ! The firepan, the kindling, the bitumen were his own ; but the lumber, of rags, old wood and nameless combustible rubbish (for all is fuel to him), was gathered from hucksters, and ass-panniers, of every description under heaven. Whereby, indeed, hucksters enough have been heard to exclaim : Out upon it, the fire is *mine* !

Nay, consider it more generally, seldom had man such a talent for borrowing. The idea,

Mirabeau

the faculty of another man he can make his ; the man himself he can make his. "All reflex and echo (*tout de reflet et de réverbère*) !" snarls old Mirabeau, who can see, but will not. Crabbed old Friend of Men ! it is his sociality, his aggregative nature ; and will not be the quality of qualities for him. In that forty-years "struggle against despotism," he has gained the glorious faculty of *self-help*, and yet not lost the glorious natural gift of *fellowship*, of being helped. Rare union : this man can live self-sufficing—yet lives also in the life of other men ; can make men love him, work with him ; a born king of men !

But consider further how, as the old Marquis still snarls, he has "made away with (*humé*, swallowed, snuffed up) all *Formulas* ;" —a fact which, if we meditate it, will in these days mean much. This is no man of system, then ; he is only a man of instincts and insights. A man nevertheless who will glare fiercely on any object ; and see through it, and conquer it : for he has intellect, he has will-force beyond other men. A man not with *logic-spectacles* ; but with an *eye* ! Unhappily without Decalogue, moral Code or Theorem of any fixed sort ; yet not without a strong living Soul in him, and Sincerity there ;

Mirabeau

a Reality, not an Artificiality, not a Sham ! And so he, having struggled "forty years against despotism," and "made away with all formulas," shall now become the spokesman of a Nation bent to do the same. For is it not precisely the struggle of France also to cast off despotism ; to make away with *her* old formulas,—having found them naught, worn out, far from the reality ? She will make away with *such* formulas ;—and even go *bare*, if need be, till she have found new ones.

Towards such work, in such manner, marches he, this singular Riquetti Mirabeau. In fiery rough figure, with black Samson-locks under the slouch-hat, he steps along there. A fiery fuliginous mass, which could not be choked and smothered, but would fill all France with smoke. And now it has got *air*; it will burn its whole substance, its whole smoke-atmosphere too, and fill all France with flame. Strange lot ! Forty years of that smoldering, with foul fire-damp and vapor enough ; then victory over that ;—and like a burning mountain he blazes heaven high ; and, for twenty-three resplendent months, pours out, in flame and molten fire-torrents, all that is in him, the Pharos and Wonder-sign of an amazed Europe ; —and then lies hollow, cold forever ! Pass on, thou question-

Mirabeau

able Gabriel Honoré, the greatest of them all; in the whole National Deputies, in the whole Nation, there is none like and none second to thee.

The Flight to Varennes*

ON Monday night, the Twentieth of June, 1791, about eleven o'clock, there is many a hackney-coach, and glass-coach (*carrosse de remise*), still rumbling, or at rest, on the streets of Paris. But of all glass-coaches, we recommend this to thee, O Reader, which stands drawn up in the Rue de l'Echelle, hard by the Carrousel and outgate of the Tuilleries ; in the Rue de l'Echelle that then was ; "opposite Ronsin the Saddler's door," as if waiting for a fare there ! Not long does it wait : a hooded Dame, with two hooded Children has issued from Villequier's door, where no sentry walks, into the Tuilleries Court-of-Princes ; into the Carrousel ; into the Rue de l'Echelle ; where the Class-coachman readily admits them ; and again waits. Not long ; another Dame, likewise hooded or shrouded, leaning on a servant, issues in the same manner ; bids the servant good-night ; and is, in the same manner, by the Glass-coachman, cheerfully admitted. Whither go so many Dames ? 'Tis his

* *The French Revolution*, book xi.

The Flight to Varennes

Majesty's *Couchée*, Majesty just gone to bed, and all the Palace-world is retiring home. But the Glass-coachman still waits ; his fare seemingly incomplete.

By and by, we note a thick-set Individual, in round hat and peruke, arm-and-arm with some servant, seemingly of the Runner or Courier sort ; he also issues through Villequier's door ; starts a shoe-buckle as he passes one of the sentries, stoops down to clasp it again ; is however, by the Glass-coachman, still more cheerfully admitted. And now, is his fare complete ? Not yet ; the Glass-coachman still waits.—Alas ! and the false Chambermaid has warned Gouvion that she thinks the Royal Family will fly this very night ; and Gouvion, distrusting his own glazed eyes, has sent express for Lafayette ; and Lafayette's Carriage, flaring with lights, rolls this moment through the inner Arch of the Carrousel,—where a Lady shaded in broad gypsy-hat, and leaning on the arm of a servant, also of the Runner or Courier sort, stands aside to let it pass, and has even the whim to touch a spoke of it with her *badine*,—light little magic rod which she calls *badine*, such as the Beautiful then wore. The flare of Lafayette's Carriage rolls past : all is found quiet in the Court-of-Princes ; sentries

The Flight to Varennes

at their post ; Majesties' Apartments closed in smooth rest. Your false Chambermaid must have been mistaken ? Watch thou, Gouvier, with Argus' vigilance ; for of a truth, treachery is within these walls.

But where is the Lady that stood aside in gypsy-hat, and touched the wheelspoke with her *badine* ? O Reader, that Lady that touched the wheelspoke was the Queen of France ! She has issued safe through that inner Arch, into the Carrousel itself ; but not into the Rue de l'Echelle. Flurried by the rattle and rencounter, she took the right hand not the left ; neither she nor her Courier knows Paris ; he indeed is no Courier, but a loyal stupid *ci-devant* Body-guard disguised as one. They are off, quite wrong, over the Pont Royal and River ; roaming disconsolate in the Rue du Bac ; far from the Glass-coachman, who still waits. Waits, with flutter of heart ; with thoughts—which he must button close up, under his jarvie-surtout !

Midnight clangs from all the City-steeple ; one precious hour has been spent so ; most mortals are asleep. The Glass-coachman waits ; and in what mood ! A brother jarvie drives up, enters into conversation ; is answered cheerfully in jarvie-dialect : the brothers of the whip exchange a pinch of

The Flight to Varennes

snuff ; * decline drinking together ; and part with good-night. Be the Heavens blest ! here at length is the Queen-lady, in gypsy-hat ; safe after perils ; who has had to inquire her way. She too is admitted ; her Courier jumps aloft, as the other, who is also a disguised Body-guard, has done ; and now, O Glass-coachman of a thousand,—Count Fersen, for the Reader sees it is thou,—drive !

Dust shall not stick to the hoofs of Fersen : crack ! crack ! the Glass-coach rattles, and every soul breathes lighter. But is Fersen on the right road ? Northeastward, to the Barrier of Saint-Martin and Metz Highway, thither were we bound: and lo, he drives right Northward ! The royal Individual, in round hat and peruke, sits astonished ; but right or wrong, there is no remedy. Crack, crack, we go incessant, through the slumbering City. Seldom, since Paris arose out of mud, or the Long-haired Kings went in Bullock-carts, was there such a drive. Mortals on each hand of you, close by, stretched out horizontal, dormant ; and we alive and quaking ! Crack, crack, through the Rue de Grammont ; across the Boulevard ; up the Rue de la Chaussee d'Antin,—these windows,

*Weber, ii. 340-342; Choiseul, pp. 44-56.

The Flight to Varennes

all silent, of Number 42, were Mirabeau's. Towards the Barrier not of Saint-Martin, but of Clichy on the utmost North ! Patience, ye royal Individuals ; Fersen understands what he is about. Passing up the Rue de Clichy, he alights for one moment at Madame Sullivan's : " Did Count Fersen's Coachman get the Baroness de Korff's new Berline ?"— "Gone with it an hour-and-half ago," grumbles responsive the drowsy Porter.—" *C'est bien.*" Yes, it is well ;—though had not such hour-and-half been *lost*, it were still better. Forth therefore, O Fersen, fast, by the Barrier de Clichy ; then Eastward along the Outer Boulevard, what horses and whipcord can do !

Thus Fersen drives, through the ambrosial night. Sleeping Paris is now all on the right-hand of him ; silent except for some snoring hum : and now he is Eastward as far as the Barrier de Saint-Martin ; looking earnestly for Baroness de Korff's Berline. This Heaven's Berline he at length does descry, drawn up with its six horses, his own German Coachman waiting on the box. Right, thou good German : now haste, whither thou knowest ! —And as for us of the Glass-coach, haste too, oh haste ; much time is already lost ! The august Glass-coach fare, six Insides, hastily

The Flight to Varennes

packs itself into the new Berline ; two Body-guard Couriers behind. The Glass-coach itself is turned adrift, its head towards the City ; to wander whither it lists,—and be found next morning tumbled in a ditch. But Fersen is on the new box, with its brave new hammer-cloths ; flourishing his whip ; he bolts forward towards Bondy. There a third and final Body-guard Courier of ours ought surely to be, with post-horses ready-ordered. There likewise ought that purchased Chaise, with the two Waiting-maids and their band-boxes, to be ; whom also her Majesty could not travel without. Swift, thou deft Fersen, and may the Heavens turn it well !

Once more, by Heaven's blessing, it is all well. Here is the sleeping Hamlet of Bondy ; ~~Chaise~~ with Waiting-women ; horses all ready, and postilions with their churn-boots, impatient in the dewy dawn. Brief harnessing done, the postilions with their churn-boots vault into the saddles ; brandish circularly their little noisy whips. Fersen, under his jarvie-surtout, bends in lowly silent reverence of adieu ; royal hands wave speechless inexpressible response ; Baroness de Korff's Berline, with the Royalty of France, bounds off : forever, as it proved, Deft Fersen dashes obliquely Northward, through the

The Flight to Varennes

country, towards Bougret ; gains Bougret, finds his German Coachman and chariot waiting there ; cracks off, and drives undiscovered into unknown space. A deft active man, we say ; what he undertook to do is nimbly and successfully done.

And so the Royalty of France is actually fled ? This precious night, the shortest of the year, it flies and drives ! *Baroness de Korff* is, at bottom, Dame de Tourzel, Governess of the Royal Children : she who came hooded with the two hooded little ones ; little Dauphin, little Madame Royale, known long afterwards as Duchesse d'Angoulême. Baroness de Korff's *Waiting-maid* is the Queen in gypsy-hat. The royal Individual in round hat and peruke, he is *Valet* for the time being. That other hooded Dame, styled *Traveling-companion*, is kind Sister Elizabeth ; she had sworn, long since, when the Insurrection of Women was, that only death should part her and them. And so they rush there, not too impetuously, through the Wood of Bondy :— over a Rubicon in their own and France's History.

Great ; though the future is all vague ! If we reach Bouillé ? If we do not reach him ? O Louis ! and this all round thee is the great

The Flight to Varennes

slumbering Earth (and overhead, the great watchful Heaven); the slumbering Wood of Bondy,—where Long-haired Childeric Do-nothing was struck through with iron;* not unreasonably, in a world like ours. These peaked stone-towers are Raincy ; towers of wicked D'Orléans. All slumbers save the multiplex rustle of our new Berline. Loose-skirted scarecrow of an Herd-merchant, with his ass and early greens, toilsomely plodding, seems the only creature we meet. But right ahead the great Northeast sends up evermore his gray brindled dawn : from dewy branch, birds here and there, with short deep warble, salute the coming Sun. Stars fade out, and Galaxies ; Street-lamps of the City of God. The Universe, O my brothers, is flinging wide its portals for the Levee of the GREAT HIGH KING. Thou, poor King Louis, farest nevertheless, as mortals do, towards Orient lands of Hope ; and the Tuilleries with *its* Levees, and France and the Earth itself, is but a larger kind of dog-hutch,—occasionally going rabid.

* * * * *

Miserable new Berline ! Why could not Royalty go in some old Berline similar to that

* Hénault, *Abrége Chronologique*, p. 36.

The Flight to Varennes

of other men ? Flying for life, one does not stickle about his vehicle. Monsieur, in a commonplace traveling-carriage is off Northwards ; Madame, his Princess, in another, with variation of route : they cross one another while changing horses, without look of recognition ; and reach Flanders, no man questioning them. Precisely in the same manner, beautiful Princess de Lamballe set off, about the same hour ; and will reach England safe : —would she had continued there ! The beautiful, the good, but the unfortunate ; reserved for a frightful end !

All runs along, unmolested, speedy, except only the new Berline. Huge leathern vehicle : —huge Argosy, let us say, or Acapulco ship ; with its heavy stern-boat of Chaise-and-pair ; with its three yellow Pilot-boats of mounted Bodyguard Couriers, rocking aimless round it and ahead of it, to bewilder, not to guide ! It lumbers along, lurchingly with stress, at a snail's pace ; noted of all the world. The Bodyguard Couriers, in their yellow liveries, go prancing and clattering ; loyal but stupid ; unacquainted with all things. Stoppages occur ; and breakages, to be repaired at Etoges. King Louis too will dismount, will walk up hills, and enjoy the blessed sunshine : —with eleven horses and double drink money,

The Flight to Varennes

and all furtherances of Nature and Art, it will be found that Royalty, flying for life, accomplishes Sixty-nine miles in Twenty-two incessant hours. Slow Royalty ! And yet not a minute of these hours but is precious : on minutes hang the destinies of Royalty now.

* * * * *

In this manner, however, has the Day bent downwards. Wearied mortals are creeping home from their field-labor ; the village-artisan eats with relish his supper of herbs, or has strolled forth to the village-street for a sweet mouthful of air and human news. Still summer-eventide everywhere ! The great Sun hangs flaming on the utmost Northwest ; for it is his longest day this year. The hill-tops rejoicing will ere long be at their ruddiest, and blush Good-night. The thrush, in green dells, on long-shadowed leafy spray, pours gushing his glad serenade, to the babble of brooks grown audibler ; silence is stealing over the Earth. Your dusty Mill of Valmy, as all other mills and drudgeries, may furl its canvas, and cease swashing and circling. The swenkt grinders in this Treadmill of an Earth have ground out another Day ; and lounge there, as we say, in village-groups ; movable, or ranked on social stone seats ;*

* *Rapport de M. Remy* (in Choiseul, p. 143).

The Flight to Varennes

their children, mischievous imps, sporting about their feet. Unnotable hum of sweet human gossip rises from this Village of Sainte-Menehould, as from all other villages. Gossip mostly sweet, unnotable ; for the very Dragoons are French and gallant ; nor as yet has the Paris-and-Verdun Diligence, with its leatherne bag, rumbled in, to terrify the minds of men.

One figure nevertheless we do note at the last door of the Village : that figure in loose-flowing nightgown, of Jean Baptiste Drouet, Master of the Post here. An acrid choleric man, rather dangerous-looking ; still in the prime of life, though he has served, in his time, as a Condé Dragoon. This day, from an early hour Drouet got his choler stirred, and has been kept fretting. Hussar Goguelat in the morning saw good, by way of thrift, to bargain with his own Innkeeper, not with Drouet regular *Maitre de Post*, about some gig-horses for the sending back of his gig ; which thing Drouet perceiving came over in red ire, menacing the Innkeeper, and would not be appeased. Wholly an unsatisfactory day. For Drouet is an acrid Patriot too, was at the Paris Feast of Pikes : and what do these Bouillē soldiers mean ? Hussars—with their gig, and a vengeance to it !—have hardly

The Flight to Varennes

been thrust out, when Dandoins and his fresh Dragoons arrive from Clermont, and stroll. For what purpose? Choleric Drouet steps out and steps in, with long-flowing night-gown; looking abroad, with that sharpness of faculty which stirred choler gives to man.

On the other hand, mark Captain Dandoins on the street of that same Village; sauntering with a face of indifference, a heart eaten of black care! For no Korff Berline makes its appearance. The great Sun flames broader towards setting: one's heart flutters on the verge of dread unutterabilities.

By Heaven! here is the yellow Body-guard Courrier; spurring fast, in the ruddy evening light! Steady, O Dandoins, stand with inscrutable indifferent face; though the yellow blockhead spurs past the Post-house; inquires to find it; and stirs the Village, all delighted with his fine livery.—Lumbering along with its mountains of bandboxes, and Chaise behind, the Korff Berline rolls in; huge Acapulco ship with its Dockboat, having got thus far. The eyes of the Villagers look enlightened, as such eyes do when a coach-transit, which is an event, occurs for them. Strolling Dragoons respectfully, so fine are the yellows liveries, bring hand to helmet; and a lady in gypsy-

The Flight to Varennes

hat responds with a grace peculiar to her.* Dandoins stands with folded arms, and what look of indifference and disdainful garrison-air a man can, while the heart is like leaping out of him. Curled disdainful mustachio ; careless glance,—which however surveys the Village-groups, and does not like them. With his eye he bespeaks the yellow Courier Be quick, be quick ! Thick-headed Yellow cannot understand the eye ; comes up mumbling, to ask in words : seen of the Village !

Nor is Post-master Drouet unobservant all this while : but steps out and steps in, with his long-flowing nightgown, in the level sunlight ; prying into several things. When a man's faculties, at the right time, are sharpened by choler, it may lead to much. That Lady in slouched gypsy-hat, though sitting back in the Carriage, does she not resemble some one we have seen, some time ;—at the Feast of Pikes, or elsewhere ? And this *Grosse Tete* in round hat and peruke, which, looking rearward, pokes itself out from time to time, methinks there are features in it—? Quick, Sieur Guillaume, Clerk of the *Directoire*, bring me a new Assignnat ! Drouet scans the new Assignnat ; compares the Paper-money Picture with the Gross Head in round

* *Declaration de La Gache* (in Choiseul, *ubi supra*).

The Flight to Varennes

hat there : by Day and Night ! you might say the one was an attempted Engraving of the other. And this march of Troops ; this sauntering and whispering,—I see it !

Drouet, Post-master of this Village, hot Patriot, Old-Dragoon of Condé, consider, therefore, what thou wilt do. And fast, for behold the new Berline, expeditiously yoked, cracks whipcord, and rolls away !—Drouet dare not, on the spur of the instant, clutch the bridles in his own two hands ; Dandoins, with broadsword, might hew you off. Our poor Nationals, not one of them here, have three hundred fusils, but then no powder ; besides one is not sure. only morally certain. Drouet, as an adroit Old-Dragoon of Condé, does what is advisablest ; privily bespeaks Clerk Guillaume, Old Dragoon of Condé he too ; privily, while Clerk Guillaume is saddling two of the fleetest horses, slips over to the Townhall to whisper a word ; then mounts with Clerk Guillaume ; and the two bound eastward in pursuit, to *see* what can be done.

They bound eastward, in sharp trot ; their moral-certainty permeating the Village, from the Townhall outwards, in busy whispers. Alas ! Captain Dandoins orders his Dragoons to mount ; but they, complaining of long fast,

The Flight to Varennes

demand bread-and-cheese first ;—before which brief repast can be eaten, the whole Village is permeated ; not whispering now, but blustering and shrieking ! National Volunteers, in hurried muster, shriek for gunpowder ; Dragoons halt between Patriotism and Rule of the Service, between bread-and-cheese and fixed bayonets : Dandoins hands secretly his Pocketbook, with its secret despatches, to the rigorous Quartermaster : the very Ostlers have stable-forks and flails. The rigorous Quartermaster, half-saddled, cuts out his way with the sword's edge, amid leveled bayonets, amid Patriot vociferations, adjurations, flail-strokes ; and rides frantic ;* —few or even none following him ; the rest, so sweetly constrained, consenting to stay there.

And thus the new Berline rolls ; and Drouet and Guillaume gallop after it, and Dandoins' Troopers or Trooper gallops after them ; and Sainte-Menehould, with some leagues of the King's Highway, is in explosion ;—and your Military thunder-chain has gone off in a self-destructive manner ; one may fear, with the frightfulest issues.

This comes of mysterious Escorts, and a new Berline with eleven horses : “ he that

* *Declarations de La Gache* (in Choiseul, p. 134).

The Flight to Varennes

has a secret should not only hide it, but hide that he has it to hide." Your first Military Escort has exploded self-destructive ; and all Military Escorts, and a suspicious Country will now be up, explosive ; comparable *not* to victorious thunder. Comparable, say rather, to the first stirring of an Alpine Avalanche ; which, once stir it, as here at Sainte-Menehould, will spread,—all round, and on and on, as far as Stenai : thundering with wild ruin, till Patriot Villagers, Peasantry, Military Escorts, new Berline and Royalty are down,—jumbling in the Abyss !

The thick shades of Night are falling. Postilions crack and whip : the Royal Berline is through Clermont, where Colonel Comte de Damas got a word whispered to it ; is safe through, towards Varennes ; rushing at the rate of double drink-money : an Unknown, "*Inconnu* on horseback," shrieks earnestly some hoarse whisper, not audible, into the rushing Carriage-window, and vanishes, left in the night. *August Travelers palpitate ; nevertheless overwearied Nature sinks every one of them into a kind of sleep. Alas, and Drouet and Clerk Guillaume spur ; taking side-roads, for shortness, for safety ; scattering

* Campan, ii. 159.

The Flight to Varennes

abroad that moral-certainty of theirs ; which flies, a bird of the air carrying it !

And your rigorous Quartermaster spurs ; awakening hoarse trumpet-tone,—as here at Clermont, calling out Dragoons gone to bed. Brave Colonel de Damas has them mounted, in part, these Clermont men ; young Cornet Remy dashes off with a few. But the Patriot Magistracy is out here at Clermont too ; National Guards shrieking for ball-cartridges ; and the Village “ illuminates itself ; ”—deft Patriots springing out of bed ; alertly, in shirt or shift, striking a light ; sticking up each his farthing candle, or penurious oil-cruise, till all glitters and glimmers ; so deft are they ! A *camisado*, or shirt-tumult, everywhere : storm-bell set a-ringing ; village-drum beating furious *générale*, as here at Clermont, under illumination ; distracted Patriots pleading and menacing ! Brave young Colonel de Damas, in that uproar of distracted Patriotism, speaks some fire-sentences to what Troopers he has : “ Comrades insulted at Sainte-Menehould : King and Country calling on the brave ; ” then gives the fire-word, *Draw swords*. Whereupon, alas, the Troopers only *smite* their sword-handles, driving them farther home ! “ To me, whoever is for the King ! ” cries Damas in despair ; and gallops,

The Flight to Varennes

he with some poor loyal Two, of the Subaltern sort, into the bosom of the Night.*

Night unexampled in the Clermontais; shortest of the year; remarkablest of the century: Night deserving to be named of Spurs! Cornet Remy, and those Few he dashed off with, has missed his road; is galloping for hours towards Verdun; then, for hours, across hedged country, through roused hamlets, towards Varennes. Unlucky Cornet Remy; unluckier Colonel Damas, with whom there ride desperate only some loyal Two! More ride not of that Clermont Escort: of other Escorts, in other Villages, not even Two may ride! but only all curvet and prance,—impeded by storm-bell and your Village illuminating itself.

And Drouet rides and Clerk Guillaume; and the Country runs.—Goguelat and Duke Choiseul are plunging through morasses, over cliffs, over stock and stone, in the shaggy woods of the Clermontais; by tracks; or trackless, with guides; Hussars tumbling into pitfalls, and lying “swooned three quarters of an hour,” the rest refusing to march without them. What an evening ride from Pont-de-Sommeville; what a thirty

* *Procès-verbal du Directoire de Clermont* (in Choiseul, pp. 189-195).

The Flight to Varennes

hours, since Choiseul quitted Paris, with Queen's-valet Leonard in the chaise by him ! Black Care sits behind the rider. Thus go they plunging ; rustle the owlet from his brandy nest ; champ the sweet-scented forest-herb, queen-of-the-meadows *spilling* her spikenard ; and frighten the ear of Night. But hark ! towards twelve o'clock, as one guesses, for the very stars are gone out : sounds of the tocsin from Varennes ? Checking bridle, the Hussar Officer listens : "Some fire undoubtedly!"—yet rides on, with double breathlessness, to verify.

Yes, gallant friends that do your utmost, it is a certain sort of fire : difficult to quench.—The Korff Berline, fairly ahead of all this riding Avalanche, reached the little paltry Village of Varennes about eleven o'clock ; hopeful, in spite of that hoarse-whispering Unknown. Do not all Towns now lie behind us ; Verdun avoided, on our right ? Within wind of Bouillé himself, in a manner ; and the darkest of midsummer nights favoring us ! And so we halt on the hill-top at the South end of the Village ; expecting our relay ; which young Bouillé, Bouillé's own son, with his Escort of Hussars, was to have ready ; for in this Village is no Post. Distracting to think of : neither horse nor Hussar is here !

The Flight to Varennes

Ah, and stout horses, a proper relay belonging to Duke Choiseul, do stand at hay, but in the Upper Village over the Bridge ; and we know not of them. Hussars likewise do wait, but drinking in the taverns. For indeed it is six hours beyond the time ; young Bouillé, silly stripling, thinking the matter over for this night, has retired to bed. And so our yellow Couriers, inexperienced, must rove, groping, bungling, through a Village mostly asleep : Postilions will not, for any money, go on with the tired horses ; not at least without refreshment ; not they, let the Valet in round hat argue as he likes.

Miserable ! “ For five-and-thirty minutes ” by the King’s watch, the Berline is at a dead stand : Round-hat arguing with Churn-boots ; tired horses slobbering their meal-and-water ; yellow Couriers groping, bungling ;—young Bouillé asleep, all the while, in the Upper Village, and Choiseul’s fine team standing there at hay. No help for it ; not with a King’s ransom ; the horses deliberately slobber, Round-hat argues, Bouillé sleeps. And mark now, in the thick night, do not two Horsemen, with jaded trot, come clank-clanking ; and start with half-pause, if one noticed them, at sight of this dim mass of a Berline, and its dull slobbering and arguing ; then

The Flight to Varennes

prick off faster, into the Village ? It is Drouet, he and Clerk Guillaume ! Still ahead, they two, of the whole riding hurly-burly ; unshot, though some brag of having chased them. Perilous is Drouet's errand also ; but he is an Old-Dragoon, with his wits shaken thoroughly awake.

The Village of Varennes lies dark and slumberous ; a most unlevel Village, of inverse saddle-shape, as men write. It sleeps ; the rushing of the River Aire singing lullaby to it. Nevertheless from the Golden Arm, *Bras d'Or* Tavern, across that sloping Market-place, there still comes shine of social light ; comes voice of rude drovers, or the like, who have not yet taken the stirrup-cup ; Boniface Le Blanc, in white apron, serving them : cheerful to behold. To this *Bras d'Or* Drouet enters, alacrity looking through his eyes ; he nudges Boniface, in all privacy, "*Camarade, es-tu bon Patriote*, Art thou a good Patriot?"—"Si je suis!" answers Boniface— "In that case," eagerly whispers Drouet—what whisper is needful, heard of Boniface alone.*

And now see Boniface Le Blanc bustling, as he never did for the jolliest toper. See Drouet and Guillaume, dexterous Old-Dra-

* *Deux Amis*, vi. 139-178.

The Flight to Varennes

goons, instantly down blocking the Bridge, with a "furniture-wagon they find there," with whatever wagons, tumbrils, barrels, barrows their hands can lay hold of;—till no carriage can pass. Then swiftly, the Bridge once blocked, see them take station hard by, under Varennes Archway: joined by Le Blanc, Le Blanc's Brother, and one or two alert Patriots he has roused. Some half-dozen in all, with National muskets, they stand close, waiting under the Archway, till that same Korff Berline rumbles up.

It rumbles up: *Alte là!* lanterns flash out from under coat-skirts, bridles chuck in strong fists, two National muskets level themselves fore and aft through the two Coach-doors: "Mesdames, your Passports?"— Alas, alas! Sieur Sausse, Procureur of the Township, Tallow-chandler also and Grocer, is there, with official grocer-politeness; Drouet with fierce logic and ready wit:— The respected Traveling Party, be it Baroness de Korff's or persons of still higher consequence, will perhaps please to rest itself in M. Sausse's till the dawn strike up!

O Louis; O hapless Marie-Antoinette, fated to pass thy life with such men! Phlegmatic Louis, art thou but lazy semi-animate phlegm, then, to the center of thee? King, Captain-

The Flight to Varennes

General, Sovereign Frank ! if thy heart ever formed, since it began beating under the name of heart, any resolution at all, be it now then, or never in this world :—“ Violent nocturnal individuals, and if it were persons of high consequence ? And if it were the King himself ? Has the King not the power, which all beggars have, of traveling unmolested on his own Highway ? Yes : it is the King ; and tremble ye to know it ! The King has said, in this one small matter ; and in France, or under God’s Throne, is no power that shall gainsay. Not the King shall ye stop here under this your miserable Archway ; but his dead body only, and answer it to Heaven and Earth. To me, Body-guards ; Postilions, *en avant !*”—One fancies in that case the pale paralysis of those two Le Blanc musketeers ; the drooping of Drouet’s under-jaw ; and how Procureur Sausse had melted like tallow in furnace-heat : Louis faring on ; in some few steps awakening Young Bouillié, awakening relays and Hussars : triumphant entry, with cavalcading high-brandishing Escorts, and Escorts, into Montmédi ; and the whole course of French History different !

Alas, it was not *in* the poor phlegmatic man. Had it been in him, French History had never come under this Varennes Archway to

The Flight to Varennes

decide itself.—He steps out; all step out. Procureur Sausse gives his grocer-arms to the Queen and Sister Elizabeth ; Majesty taking the two children by the hand. And thus they walk, coolly back, over the Market-place to Procureur Sausse's ; mount into his small upper story ; where straightway his Majesty “demands refreshments.” Demands refreshments, as is written ; gets bread-and-cheese with a bottle of Burgundy ; and remarks, that it is the best Burgundy he ever drank !

Charlotte Corday*

IN the leafy months of June and July, several French Departments germinate a set of rebellious *paper-leaves*, named Proclamations, Resolutions, Journals, or Diurnals, "of the Union for Resistance to Oppression." In particular, the Town of Caen, in Calvados, sees its paper-leaf of *Bulletin de Caen* suddenly bud, suddenly establish itself as Newspaper there; under the Editorship of Girondin National Representatives!

For among the proscribed Girondins are certain of a more desperate humor. Some, as Vergniaud, Valazé, Gensonné, "arrested in their own houses," will await with stoical resignation what the issue may be. Some, as Brissot, Rabaut, will take to flight, to concealment; which, as the Paris Barriers are opened again in a day or two, is not yet difficult. But others there are who will rush, with Buzot, to Calvados; or far over France, to Lyons, Toulon, Nantes and elsewhither, and then rendezvous at Caen: to awaken as with war-

* *The French Revolution*, book xvii., chap. i.

Charlotte Corday

trumpet the respectable Departments ; and strike down an anarchic Mountain Faction ; at least not yield without a stroke at it. Of this latter temper we count some score or more, of the Arrested, and of the Not-yet-arrested : a Buzot, a Barbaroux, Louvet, Guadet, Pétion, who have escaped from Arrestment in their own homes ; a Salles, a Pythagorean Valady, a Duchâtel, that came in blanket and nightcap to vote for the life of Louis, who have escaped from danger and likelihood of Arrestment. These, to the number at one time of Twenty-seven, do accordingly lodge here, at the "*Intendance, or Departmental Mansion,*" of the town of Caen in Calvados ; welcomed by Persons in Authority ; welcomed and defrayed, having no money of their own. And the *Bulletin de Caen* comes forth, with the most animating paragraphs : How the Bordeaux Department, the Lyons Department, this Department after the other is declaring itself ; sixty, or say sixty-nine, or seventy-two * respectable Departments either declaring, or ready to declare. Nay Marseilles, it seems, will march on Paris by itself, if need be. So has Marseilles Town said, That she will march. But on the other hand, that Montélimart Town has said, No thoroughfare ; and

* Meillan, pp. 72, 73 ; Louvet, p. 129.

Charlotte Corday

means even to "bury herself" under her own stone and mortar first,—of this be no mention in *Bulletin de Caen*.

Such animating paragraphs we read in this new Newspaper; and fervors and eloquent sarcasm: tirades against the Mountain, from the pen of Deputy Salles; which resemble, say friends, Pascal's *Provincials*. What is more to the purpose, these Girondins have got a General in chief, one Wimpfen, formerly under Dumouriez; also a secondary questionable General Puisaye, and others; and are doing their best to raise a force for war. National Volunteers, whosoever is of right heart: gather in, ye national Volunteers, friends of Liberty; from our Calvados Townships, from the Eure, from Brittany, from far and near: forward to Paris, and extinguish Anarchy! Thus at Caen, in the early July days, there is a drumming and parading, a perorating and consulting Staff and Army; Council; Club of *Carabots*, Anti-Jacobin friends of Freedom, to denounce atrocious Morat. With all which, and the editing of *Bulletins*, a National Representative has his hands full.

At Caen it is most animated; and, as one hopes, more or less animated in the "Seventy-two Departments that adhere to us." And in

Charlotte Corday

a France begirt with Cimmerian invading Coalitions, and torn with an internal La Vendée, *this* is the conclusion we have arrived at : To put down Anarchy by Civil War ! *Durum et durum*, the Proverb says, *non faciunt murum*. La Vendée burns : Santerre can do nothing there ; he may return home and brew beer. Cimmerian bombshells fly all along the North. That Siege of Mentz is become famed ;—lovers of the Picturesque (as Goethe will testify), washed country-people of both sexes, stroll thither on Sundays, to see the artillery work and counterwork ; “you only duck a little while the shot whizzes past.” * Condé is capitulating to the Austrians ; Royal Highness of York, these several weeks, fiercely batters Valenciennes. For, alas, our fortified Camp of Famars was stormed ; General Dampierre was killed ; General Custine was blamed,—and indeed is now come to Paris to give “explanations.”

Against all which the Mountain and atrocious Marat must even make head as they can. They, anarchic Convention as they are, publish Decrees, expostulatory, explanatory, yet not without severity : they ray forth Commissioners, singly or in pairs, the olive-branch in one hand, yet the sword in the other. Commis-

* *Belagerung von Mains* (Goethe's *Werke*, xxx. 278-334).

Charlotte Corday

sioners come even to Caen ; but without effect. Mathematical Romme, and Prieur named of the Côte d'Or, venturing thither, with their olive and sword, are packed into prison : there may Romme lie, under lock and key, "for fifty days ;" and meditate his New Calendar, if he please. Cimmeria, La Vendée, and Civil War ! Never was Republic One and Indivisible at a lower ebb.

Amid which dim ferment of Caen and the World, History specially notices one thing : in the lobby of the Mansion de l'*Intendance*, where busy Deputies are coming and going, a young Lady with an aged valet, taking grave graceful leave of Deputy Barbaroux.* She is of stately Norman figure ; in her twenty-fifth year ; of beautiful still countenance : her name is Charlotte Corday, heretofore styled D'Armans, while Nobility still was. Barbaroux has given her a Note to Deputy Duperré,—him who once drew his sword in the effervescence. Apparently she will to Paris on some errand ? "She was a Republican before the Revolution, and never wanted energy." A completeness, a decision is in this fair female Figure : "by energy she means the spirit that will prompt one to sacrifice himself for his country." What if she,

* Meillan, p. 75; Louvet, p. 114.

Charlotte Corday

this fair young Charlotte, had emerged from her secluded stillness, suddenly like a Star ; cruel-lovely, with half-angelic, half-demonic splendor ; to gleam for a moment, and in a moment be extinguished : to be held in memory, so br'ght complete was she, through long centuries !—Quitting Cimmerian Coalitions without, and the dim-simmering Twenty-five Millions within, History will look fixedly at this one fair Apparition of a Charlotte Corday ; will note whither Charlotte moves, how the little Life burns forth so radiant, then vanishes swallowed of the Night.

With Barbaroux's Note of Introduction, and slight stock of luggage, we see Charlotte on Tuesday the ninth of July seated in the Caen Diligence, with a place for Paris. None takes farewell of her, wishes her Good-journey : her Father will find a line left, signifying that she has gone to England, that he must pardon her and forget her. The drowsy Diligence lumbers along ; amid drowsy talk of Politics, and praise of the Mountain ; in which she mingles not ; all night, all day, and again all night. On Thursday, not long before noon, we are at the bridge of Neuilly ; here is Paris with her thousand black domes, the goal and purpose of thy journey ! Arrived at the Inn de la Providence in the Rue des

Charlotte Corday

Vieux Augustins, Charlotte demands a room ; hastens to bed ; sleeps all afternoon and night, till the morrow morning.

On the morrow morning, she delivers her Note to Duperret. It relates to certain Family Papers which are in the Minister of the Interior's hand ; which a Nun at Caen, an old Convent-friend of Charlotte's, has need of ; which Duperret shall assist her in getting : this then was Charlotte's errand to Paris ? She has finished this, in the course of Friday ; —yet says nothing of returning. She has seen and silently investigated several things. The Convention, in bodily reality, she has seen ; what the Mountain is like. The living physiognomy of Marat she could not see ; he is sick at present, and confined to home.

About eight on the Saturday morning, she purchases a large sheath-knife in the Palais Royal ; then straightway, in the Place des Victoires, takes a hackney-coach : "To the Rue de l'École de Médecine, No. 44." It is the residence of the Citoyen Marat !—The Citoyen Marat is ill, and cannot be seen : which seems to disappoint her much. Her business is with Marat, then ? Hapless beautiful Charlotte ; hapless squalid Marat ! From Caen in the utmost West, from Neu-

Charlotte Corday

châtel in the utmost East, they two are drawing nigh each other ; they two have, very strangely, business together.—Charlotte, returning to her Inn, despatches a short Note to Marat ; signifying that she is from Caen, the seat of rebellion ; that she desires earnestly to see him, and “ will put it in his power to do France a great service.” No answer. Charlotte writes another Note, still more pressing ; sets out with it by coach, about seven in the evening, herself. Tired day-laborers have again finished their Week ; huge Paris is circling and simmering, manifold, according to its vague wont : this one fair Figure has decision in it ; drives straight, —towards a purpose.

It is yellow July evening, we say, the thirteenth of the month ; eve of the Bastille day,—when “ M. Marat,” four years ago, in the crowd of the Pont Neuf, shrewdly required of that Besenval Hussar-party, which had such friendly dispositions, “ to dismount, and give up their arms, then : ” and became notable among Patriot men. Four years ; what a road he has traveled ;—and sits now, about half-past seven of the clock, stewing in slipper-bath ; sore afflicted ; ill of Revolution Fever,—of what other malady this History had rather not name. Excessively sick and

Charlotte Corday

worn, poor man : with precisely eleven-pence-halfpenny of ready-money, in paper ; with slipper-bath ; strong three-footed stool for writing on, the while ; and a squalid—Washerwoman, one may call her : that is his civic establishment in Medical-School Street ; thither and not elsewhere has his road led him. Not to the reign of Brotherhood and Perfect Felicity ; yet surely on the way towards that ?—Hark, a rap again ! A musical woman's voice, refusing to be rejected : it is the Citoyenne who would do France a service. Marat, recognizing from within, cries, Admit her. Charlotte Corday is admitted.

Citoyen Marat, I am from Caen, the seat of rebellion, and wished to speak with you.—Be seated, *mon enfant*. Now what are the Traitors doing at Caen ? What Deputies are at Caen ?—Charlotte names some Deputies. “ Their heads shall fall within a fortnight,” croaks the eager People's-Friend, clutching his tablets to write : *Barbaroux*, *Pétion*, writes he with bare shrunk arm, turning aside in the bath : *Pétion*, and *Louvet*, and—Charlotte has drawn her knife from the sheath ; plunges it, with one sure stroke, into the writer's heart. “ *A moi, chère amie*, Help, dear ! ” no more could the Death-choked say

Charlotte Corday

or shriek. The helpful Washerwoman running in, there is no Friend of the People, or Friend of the Washerwoman left ; but his life with a groan gushes out, indignant, to the shades below.*

And so Marat People's-Friend is ended : the lone Stylites has got hurled down suddenly from his Pillar,—*whitherward*. He that made him knows. Patriot Paris may sound triple and tenfold, in dole and wail ; re-echoed by Patriot France ; and the Convention, “Chabot pale with terror, declaring that they are to be all assassinated,” may decree him Pantheon Honors, Public Funeral, Mirabeau’s dust making way for him ; and Jacobin Societies, in lamentable oratory, summing up his character, parallel him to One, whom they think it honor to call “the good Sansculotte,” —whom we name not here ; † also a Chapel may be made, for the urn that holds his Heart, in the Place du Carrousel ; and newborn children be named Marat ; and Lago-di-Como Hawkers bake mountains of stucco into unbeautiful Busts ; and David paint his Picture, or Death-Scene ; and such other

* *Moniteur*, Nos. 197, 198, 199; *Hist.-Parl.* xxviii. 301–305; *Deux Amis*, x. 368–374.

† See *Eloge funèbre de Jean-Paul Marat*, prononcé à Strasbourg (in Barbaroux, pp. 125–131); Mercier, etc.

Charlotte Corday

Apotheosis take place as the human genius, in these circumstances, can devise : but Marat returns no more to the light of this Sun. One sole circumstance we have read with clear sympathy, in the old *Moniteur* Newspaper : how Marat's Brother comes from Neuchâtel to ask of the Convention, "that the deceased Jean-Paul Marat's musket be given him."* For Marat too had a brother and natural affections ; and was wrapt once in swaddling-clothes, and slept safe in a cradle like the rest of us. Ye children of men !—A sister of his, they say, lives still to this day in Paris.

As for Charlotte Corday, her work is accomplished ; the recompense of it is near and sure. The *chère amie*, and neighbors of the house, flying at her, she "overturns some movables," entrenches herself till the gendarmes arrive ; then quietly surrenders ; goes quietly to the Abbaye Prison : she alone quiet, all Paris sounding, in wonder, in rage or admiration, round her. Duperret is put in arrest, on account of her ; his Papers sealed, —which may lead to consequences. Fauchet, in like manner ; though Fauchet had not so much as heard of her. Charlotte, confronted with these two Deputies, praises the grave

* Séance du 16 Septembre, 1793.

Charlotte Corday

firmness of Duperret, censures the dejection of Fauchet.

On Wednesday morning, the thronged Palais de Justice and Revolutionary Tribunal can see her face; beautiful and calm: she dates it "fourth day of the Preparation of Peace." A strange murmur ran through the Hall, at sight of her; you could not say of what character.* Tinville has his indictments and tape-papers: the cutler of the Palais Royal will testify that he sold her the sheath-knife; "All these détails are needless," interrupted Charlotte; "it is I that killed Marat." By whose instigation?—"By no one's." What tempted you, then? His crimes. "I killed one man," added she, raising her voice extremely (*extrêmement*), as they went on with their questions, "I killed one man to save a hundred thousand; a villain to save innocents; a savage wild-beast to give repose to my country. I was a Republican before the Revolution; I never wanted energy." There is therefore nothing to be said. The public gazes astonished: the hasty limners sketch her features, Charlotte not disapproving: the men of law proceed with their formalities. The doom is Death

* *Procès de Charlotte Corday, etc. (Hist. Parl. xxviii. 311-338).*

Charlotte Corday

as a murderer. To her Advocate she gives thanks ; in gentle phrase, in high-flown classical spirit. To the Priest they send her she gives thanks ; but needs not any shriving, any ghostly or other aid from him.

On this same evening, therefore, about half-past seven o'clock, from the gate of the Conciergerie, to a City all on tip-toe, the fatal Cart issues ; seated on it a fair young creature, sheeted in red smock of Murderess ; so beautiful, serene, so full of life ; journeying towards death,—alone amid the World. Many take off their hats, saluting reverently ; for what heart but must be touched ? * Others growl and howl. Adam Lux, of Mentz, declares that she is greater than Brutus ; that it were beautiful to die with her : the head of this young man seems turned. At the Place de la Révolution, the countenance of Charlotte wears the same still smile. The executioners proceed to bind her feet ; she resists, thinking it meant as an insult ; on a word of explanation, she submits with cheerful apology. As the last act, all being now ready, they take the neckerchief from her neck ; a blush of maidenly shame overspreads that fair face and neck ; the cheeks were still tinged with it when the executioner lifted the

* *Deux Amis*, x. 374-384.

Charlotte Corday

severed head, to show it to the people. "It is most true," says Forster, "that he struck the cheek insultingly; for I saw it with my eyes: the Police imprisoned him for it."*

In this manner have the Beautifulest and the Squalidest come in collision, and extinguished one another. Jean-Paul Marat and Marie-Anne Charlotte Corday both, suddenly, are no more. "Day of the Preparation of Peace"? Alas, how were peace possible or preparable, while, for example, the hearts of lovely Maidens, in their convent-stillness, are dreaming not of Love-paradises and the light of Life, but of Codrus' sacrifices and Death well-earned? That Twenty-five Million hearts have got to such temper, this is the Anarchy; the soul of it lies in this: whereof not peace can be the embodiment! The death of Marat, whetting old animosities ten-fold, will be worse than any life. O ye hapless Two, mutually extinctive, the Beautiful and the Squalid, sleep ye well,—in the Mother's bosom that bore you both!

This is the History of Charlotte Corday; most definite, most complete; angelic-demonic: like a Star! Adam Lux goes home, half-delirious; to pour forth his Apotheosis of

* *Briefwechsel*, i. 508.

Charlotte Corday

her, in paper and print ; to propose that she have a statue with this inscription, *Greater than Brutus*. Friends represent his danger ; Lux is reckless ; thinks it were beautiful to die with her.

Battle of Dunbar*

THE small Town of Dunbar stands, high and windy, looking down over its herring-boats, over its grim old Castle now much honey-combed,—on one of those projecting rock-promontories with which that shore of the Frith of Forth is niched and vandyked, as far as the eye can reach. A beautiful sea ; good land too, now that the plower understands his trade ; a grim niched barrier of whinstone sheltering it from the chafings and tumblings of the big blue German Ocean. Seaward St. Abb's Head, of whinstone, bounds your horizon to the east, not very far off ; west, close by, is the deep bay, and fishy little village of Belhaven : the gloomy Bass and other rock-islets, and farther the Hills of Fife, and foreshadows of the Highlands, are visible as you look seaward. From the bottom of Belhaven bay to that of the next sea-bight St. Abb's ward, the Town and its environs form a peninsula. Along the base of which peninsula, "not much above a mile and a half from sea to sea," Oliver Cromwell's Army, on

* *Cromwell's Letters and Speeches, part vi.*

Battle of Dunbar

Monday, 2d of September, 1650, stands ranked, with its tents and Town behind it,—in very forlorn circumstances. This now is all the ground that Oliver is lord of in Scotland. His Ships lie in the offing, with biscuit and transport for him but visible elsewhere in the Earth no help.

Landward as you look from the Town of Dunbar there rises, some short mile off, a dusky continent of barren heath Hills; the Lammermoor, where only mountain-sheep can be at home. The crossing of *which*, by any of its boggy passes, and brawling stream-courses, no Army, hardly a solitary Scotch Packman could attempt, in such weather. To the edge of these Lammermoor Heights, David Lesley has betaken himself; lies now along the outmost spur of them,— a long Hill of considerable height, which the Dunbar people call the Dun, Doon, or sometimes for fashion's sake the Down, adding to it the Teutonic *Hill* likewise, though *Dun* itself in old Celtic signifies Hill. On this Doon Hill lies David Lesley with the victorious Scotch Army, upwards of twenty thousand strong; with the Committees of Kirk and Estates, the chief Dignitaries of the Country, and in fact the flower of what the pure Covenant in this the twelfth year of its existence can still bring

Battle of Dunbar

forth. There lies he since Sunday night, on the top and slope of this Doon Hill, with the impassable heath-continents behind him ; embraces, as within outspread tiger-claws, the base-line of Oliver's Dunbar peninsula ; waiting what Oliver will do. Cockburnspath with its ravines has been seized on Oliver's left, and made impassable ; behind Oliver is the sea ; in front of him Lesley, Doon Hill, and the heath-continent of Lammermoor. Lesley's force is of three-and-twenty thousand, * in spirits as of men chasing, Oliver's about half as many, in spirits as of men chased. What is to become of Oliver ?

Haselrig, as we know, is Governor of Newcastle. Oliver on Monday writes this Note ; means to send it off, I suppose, by sea. Making no complaint for himself, ~~but~~ remarkable Oliver ; doing, with grave brevity, in the hour the business of the hour. "He was a strong man," so intimates Charles Harvey, who knew him : "in the dark perils of war, in the high places of the field, hope shone in him like a pillar of fire, when it had gone out in all the others." † Agenuine King

* 27,000 say the English Pamphlets ; 16,000 foot and 7,000 horse, says Sir Edward Walker (p. 182) ; who has access to know.

† *Passages in his Highness's last Sickness*, already referred to

Battle of Dunbar

among men, Mr. Harvey. The divinest sight this world sees,—when it is privileged to see such, and not be sickened with the unholy apery of such ! He is just now upon an “engagement,” or complicated concern, “very difficult.”

“ To the Honorable Sir Arthur Haselrig, at Newcastle or elsewhere : These. Haste, haste.

“ [DUNBAR] 2d September, 1650.

“ DEAR SIR,—We are upon an Engagement very difficult. The Enemy hath blocked up our way at the Pass at Copperspath, through which we cannot get without almost a miracle. He lieth so upon the Hills that we know not how to come that way without great difficulty ; and our lying here daily consumeth our men, who fall sick beyond imagination.

“ I perceive, your forces are not in a capacity for present release. Wherefore, whatever becomes of us, it will be well for you to get what forces you can together ; and the South to help what they can. The business nearly concerneth all Good People. If your forces had been in a readiness to have fallen upon the back of Copperspath, it might have occasioned supplies to have come to us. But the only wise God knows what is best. All

Battle of Dunbar

shall work for Good. Our spirits * are comfortable, praised be the Lord,—though our present condition be as it is. And indeed we have much hope in the Lord ; of whose mercy we have had large experience. “Indeed, do you get together what forces you can against them. Send to friends in the South to help with more. Let H. Vane know what I write.

I would not make it public, lest danger should accrue thereby. You know what use to make hereof. Let me hear from you. I rest,

“Your servant,
OLIVER CROMWELL.

“[P. S.] It’s difficult for me to send to you. Let me hear from [you] after [you receive this].”†

The base of Oliver’s “Dunbar Peninsula,” as we have called it (or Dunbar Pinfold where

* minds.

† Communicated by John Hare, Esquire, Rosemont Cottage, Clifton. The MS. at Clifton is a Copy, without date; but has this title in an old hand: “Copy of an original Letter of Oliver Cromwell, written with his own hand, the day before the Battle of Dunbar, to Sir A. Haselridge.”—*Note to Second Edition.* Found since (1846), with the Postscript, printed from the Original, in Brand’s *History of Newcastle* (London, 1789), ii. 479.—*Note to Third Edition.* Autograph Original found now (May, 1847); in the possession of R. Ormston, Esq. NewCastle-on-Tyne. See postea, p. 143, and Appendix, No 19.

Battle of Dunbar

he is now hemmed in, upon “an entanglement very difficult,”) extends from Belhaven Bay on his right, to Brocksouth House on his left; “about a mile and a half from sea to sea,” Brocksouth House, the Earl (now Duke) of Roxburgh’s mansion, which still stands there, his soldiers now occupy as their extreme post on the left. As its name indicates, it is the *mouth* or issue of a small Rivulet, or *Burn*, called *Brock*, *Brocksburn*; which, springing from the Lammermoor, and skirting David Lesley’s Doon Hill, finds its egress here into the sea. The reader who would form an image to himself of the great Tuesday, 3d of September, 1650, at Dunbar, must note well this little *Burn*. It runs in a deep grassy glen, which the South-country Offices in those old Pamphlets describe as a “deep *ditch*, forty feet in depth, and about as many in width”—ditch dug out by the little Brook itself, and carpeted with green-sward, in the course of long thousands of years. It runs pretty close by the foot of Doon Hill; forms, from this point to the sea, the boundary of Oliver’s position; his force is arranged in battle-order along the left bank of this Brocksburn, and its grassy glen; he is busied all Monday, he and his Officers, in ranking them there. “Before sunrise on

Battle of Dunbar

"Monday" Lesley sent down his horse from the Hill-top, to occupy the other side of this Brook ; "about four in the afternoon" his train came down, his whole Army gradually came down ; and they now are ranking themselves on the opposite side of Brocksburn, —on rather narrow ground ; cornfields, but swiftly sloping upwards to the steep of Doon Hill. This goes on, in the wild showers and winds of Monday, 2d September, 1650, on both sides of the Rivulet of Brock. Whoever will begin the attack, must get across this Brook and its glen first ; a thing of much disadvantage.

Behind Oliver's ranks, between him and Dunbar, stand his tents ; sprinkled up and down, by battalions, over the face of this "Peninsula ;" which is a low though very uneven tract of ground ; now in our time all yellow with wheat and barley in the autumn season, but at that date only partially tilled, —describable by Yorkshire Hodgson as a place of plashes and rough bent-grass ; terribly beaten by showery winds that day, so that your tent will hardly stand. There was then but one Farmhouse on this tract, where now are not a few : thither were Oliver's Cannon sent this morning ; they had at first been lodged "in the Church," an edifice

Battle of Dunbar

standing then as now somewhat apart, "at the south end of Dunbar." We have notice of only one other "small house," belike some poor shepherd's homestead, in Oliver's tract of ground : it stands close by the Brock Rivulet itself, and in the bottom of the little glen ; at a place where the banks of it flatten themselves out into a slope passable for carts : this of course, as the one "pass" in that quarter, it is highly important to seize. Pride and Lambert lodged "six horse and fifteen foot" in this poor hut early in the morning : Lesley's horse came across, and drove them out ; killing some and "taking three prisoners ;"—and so got possession of this pass and hut ; but did not keep it. Among the three prisoners was one musketeer, "a very stout man, though he has but a wooden arm," and some iron hook at the end of it, poor fellow. He "fired thrice," not without effect, with his wooden arm ; and was not taken without difficulty : a handfast stubborn man ; they carried him across to General Lesley to give some account of himself. In several of the old Pamphlets, which agree in all the details of it, this is what we read :—

"General *David* Lesley (old Leven," the other Lesley, "being in the Castle of Edin-

Battle of Dunbar

burgh, as they relate *), asked this man, If the Enemy did intend to fight? He replied, ‘ What do you think we come here for? We come for nothing else ! ’—‘ Soldier,’ says Lesley, ‘ how will you fight, when you have shipped half of your men, and all your great guns ? ’ The Soldier replied, ‘ Sir, if you please to draw down your men, you shall find both men and great guns too ! ’”—A most dogged handfast man, this with the wooden arm, and iron hook on it! “One of the Officers asked, How he durst answer the General so saucily? He said, ‘ I only answer the question put to me ! ’” Lesley sent him across, free again, by a trumpet: he made his way to Cromwell; reported what had passed, and added doggedly, He for one had lost twenty shillings by the business,—plundered from him in this action. “The Lord General gave him thereupon two pieces,” which I think are forty shillings; and sent him away rejoicing.† —This is the adventure at the “pass” by the shepherd’s hut in the bottom of the glen, close by the Brocksburn itself.

* Old Leven is *here*, if the Pamphlet knew; but only as a volunteer and without command, though nominally still General-in-chief.

† Cadwell the Army-Messenger’s Narrative to the Parliament (in Carte’s *Ormond Papers*, i. 382). Given also, with other details, in King’s Pamphlets, small 4to, no. 478, §§ 9, 7, 10; no. 479, § 1; &c. &c.

Battle of Dunbar

And now farther, on the great scale, we are to remark very specially that there is just one other "pass" across the Brocksburn ; and this is precisely where the London road now crosses it ; about a mile east from the former pass, and perhaps two gunshots west from Brocksmouth House. There the great road then as now crosses the Burn of Brock ; the steep grassy glen, or " broad ditch forty feet deep," flattening itself out here once more into a passable slope : passable, but still steep on the southern or Lesley side, still mounting up there, with considerable acclivity, into a high table-ground, out of which the Doon Hill, as outskirt of the Lammermoor, a short mile to your right, gradually gathers itself. There, at this "pass," on and about the present London road, as you discover after long dreary dim examining, took place the brunt or essential agony of the Battle of Dunbar long ago. Read in the extinct old Pamphlets, and ever again obstinately read, till some light risé in them, look even with unmilitary eyes at the ground as it now is, you do at last obtain small glimmerings of distinct features here and there,—which gradually coalesce into a kind of image for you ; and some spectrum of the Fact becomes visible ; rises veritable, face to face, on you, grim and sad in the depths of

Battle of Dunbar

the old dead Time. Yes, my traveling friends, vehiculating in gigs or otherwise over that piece of London road, you may say to yourselves, Here without monument is the grave of a valiant thing which was done under the Sun; the footprint of a Hero, not yet quite undistinguishable, is here!—

“The Lord General about four o’clock,” say the old Pamphlets, “went into the Town to take some refreshment,” a hasty late dinner, or early supper, whichever we may call it; “and very soon returned back,”—having written Sir Arthur’s Letter, I think, in the interim. Coursing about the field, with enough of things to order; walking at last with Lambert in the Park or Garden of Brocks-mouth House, he discerns that Lesley is astir on the Hillside; altering his position somewhat. That Lesley, in fact, is coming wholly down to the basis of the Hill, where his horse had been since sunrise: coming wholly down to the edge of the Brook and glen, among the sloping harvest-fields there; and also is bringing up his left wing of horse, most part of it, towards his right; edging himself, “shoggung,” as Oliver calls it, his whole line more and more to the right! His meaning is, to get hold of Brocksouth House and the pass

Battle of Dunbar

of the Brook there ; * after which it will be free to him to attack us when he will !—Lesley, in fact, considers, or at least the Committee of Estates and Kirk consider, that Oliver is lost ; that, on the whole, he must not be left to retreat, but must be attacked and annihilated here. A vague story, due to Bishop Burnet, the watery source of many such, still circulates about the world, That it was the Kirk Committee who forced Lesley down against his will ; that Oliver, at sight of it, exclaimed, “The Lord hath delivered” etc. : which nobody is in the least bound to believe. It appears, from other quarters, that Lesley *was* advised or sanctioned in this attempt by the Committee of Estates and Kirk, but also that he was by no means hard to advise ; that, in fact, lying on the top of Doon Hill, shelterless in such weather, was no operation to spin out beyond necessity ;—and that if anybody pressed too much upon him with advice to come down and fight, it was likeliest to be Royalist Civil Dignitaries, who had plagued him with their cavilings at his cunctations, at his “secret fellow-feeling for the Sectarians and Regicides,” ever since this War began. The poor Scotch Clergy have enough of their own to answer for in this

* Baille's *Letters*, iii. 111.

Battle of Dunbar

business ; let every back bear the burden that belongs to it. In a word, Lesley descends, has been descending all day, and "shogs" himself to the right,—urged, I believe, by manifold counsel, and by the nature of the case ; and, what is equally important for us, Oliver sees him, and sees through him, in this movement of his.

At sight of this movement, Oliver suggests to Lambert standing by him, Does it not give *us* an advantage, if we, instead of him, like to begin the attack ? Here is the Enemy's right wing coming out to the open space, free to be attacked on any side ; and the main-battle hampered in narrow sloping ground between Doon Hill and the Brook, has no room to maneuver or assist :* beat this right wing where it now stands ; take it in flank and front with an overpowering force,—it is driven upon its own main-battle, the whole Army is beaten ? Lambert eagerly assents, "had meant to say the same thing." Monk, who comes up at the moment, likewise assents ; as the other Officers do, when the case is set before them. It is the plan resolved upon for battle. The attack shall begin to-morrow before dawn.

And so the soldiers stand to their arms, or

* Hodgson.

Battle of Dunbar

lie within instant reach of their arms, all night ; being upon an engagement very difficult indeed. The night is wild and wet ;—2d of September means 12th by our calendar : the Harvest Moon wades deep among clouds of sleet and hail. Whoever has a heart for prayer, let him pray now, for the wrestle of death is at hand. Pray,—and withal keep his powder dry ! And be ready for extremities, and quit himself like a man !—Thus they pass the night ; making that Dunbar Peninsula and Brock Rivulet long memorable to me. We English have some tents ; the Scots have none. The hoarse sea moans bodeful, swinging low and heavy against these whinstone bays ; the sea and the tempests are abroad, all else asleep but we,—and there is One that rides on the wings of the wind.

Towards three in the morning the Scotch foot, by order of a Major-General say some,* extinguish their matches, all but two in a company ; cower under the corn-shocks, seeking some imperfect shelter and sleep. Be wakeful, ye English ; watch, and pray, and keep your powder dry. About four o'clock comes order to my pudding-headed Yorkshire friend, that his regiment must mount and

* "Major-General Holburn" (he that escorted Cromwell into Edinburgh in 1648), says Walker, p. 180.

Battle of Dunbar

march straightway ; his and various other regiments march, pouring swiftly to the left to Brocksmouth House, to the Pass over the Brock. With overpowering force let us storm the Scots right wing there ; beat that, and all is beaten. Major Hodgson riding along, heard, he says, "a Cornet praying in the night ;" a company of poor men, I think, making worship there, under the void Heaven, before battle joined : Major Hodgson, giving his charge to a brother Officer, turned aside to listen for a minute, and worship and pray along with them ; haply his last prayer on this Earth, as it might prove to be. But no : this Cornet prayed with such effusion as was wonderful ; and imparted strength to my Yorkshire friend, who strengthened his men by telling them of it. And the Heavens, in their mercy, I think, have opened us a way of deliverance !—The Moon gleams out, hard and blue, riding among hail-clouds ; and over St. Abb's Head a streak of dawn is rising.

And now is the hour when the attack should be, and no Lambert is yet here, he is ordering the line far to the right yet ; and Oliver occasionally, in Hodgson's hearing, is impatient for him. The Scots too, on this wing, are awake ; thinking to surprise us ; there is their trumpet

Battle of Dunbar

sounding, we heard it once ; and Lambert, who was to lead the attack, is not here. The Lord General is impatient ;—behold Lambert at last ! The trumpets peal, shattering with fierce clangor Night's silence ; the cannons awaken along all the Line : "The Lord of Hosts ! The Lord of Hosts !" On, my brave ones, on !—

The dispute "on this right wing was hot and stiff, for three quarters of an hour." Plenty of fire, from field-pieces, snap-hances, matchlocks, entertains the Scotch main-battle across the Brock ;—poor stiffened men, roused from the corn-shocks with their matches all out ! But here on the right, their horse, "with lances in the front rank," charge desperately ; drive us back across the hollow of the Rivulet ;—back a little ; but the Lord gives us courage, and we storm home again, horse and foot, upon them, with a shock like tornado tempests ; break them, beat them, drive them all adrift. "Some fled towards Copperspath, but most across their own foot." Their own poor foot, whose matches were hardly well alight yet ! Poor men, it was a terrible awakening for them : field-pieces and charge of foot across the Brocksburn ; and now here is their own horse in mad panic trampling them to death. Above three thou-

Battle of Dunbar

sand killed upon the place : "I never saw such a charge of foot and horse," says one ; * nor did I. Oliver was still near to Yorkshire Hodgson when the shock succeeded ; Hodgson heard him say, "They run ! I profess they run !" And over St. Abb's Head and the German Ocean, just then, bursts the first gleam of the level Sun upon us, "and I heard Nol say, in the words of the Psalmist, 'Let God arise, let His enemies be scattered,'"—or in Rous's meter,—

" Let God arise, and scattered
 Let all his enemies be ;
And let all those that do him hate
 Before his presence flee ! "

Even so. The Scotch Army is shivered to utter ruin ; rushes in tumultuous wreck, hither, thither ; to Belhaven, or, in their distraction, even to Dunbar ; the chase goes as far as Haddington ; led by Hacker. "The Lord General made a halt," says Hodgson, "and sang the Hundred-and-seventeenth Psalm," till our horse could gather for the chase. Hundred-and-seventeenth Psalm, at the foot of the Doon Hill ; there we uplift it, to the tune of Bangor, or some still higher

* Rushworth's Letter to the Speaker (in *Parliamentary History*, xix. 341).

Battle of Dunbar

score, and roll it strong and great against the sky :—

" Oh, give ye praise unto the Lord,
All nati-ons that be;
Likewise ye people all, accord
His name to magnify !

" For great to-us-ward ever are
His loving-kindnesses ;
His truth endures forevermore :
The Lord oh do ye bless ! "

And now, to the chase again.

The Watch-Tower*

IT was the attic floor of the highest house in the Wahngasse: and might truly be called the pinnacle of Weissnichtwo, for it rose sheer up above the contiguous roofs, themselves rising from elevated ground. Moreover, with its windows it looked towards all the four *Orte*, or as the Scotch say, and we ought to say, *Airts*: the sitting-room itself commanded three; another came to view in the *Schlaf-gemach* (bedroom) at the opposite end; to say nothing of the kitchen, which offered two, as it were, *duplicates*, and showing nothing new. So that it was in fact the speculum or watch-tower of Teufelsdröckh; wherfrom, sitting at ease, he might see the whole life-circulation of that considerable City; the streets and lanes of which, with all their doing and driving (*Thun und Treiben*), were for the most part visible there.

"I look down into all that wasp-nest or beehive," have we heard him say, "and witness their wax-laying and honey-making, and poison-brewing, and choking by sulphur.

* *Sartor Resartus*, book i., chap. iii.

The Watch-Tower

From the Palace esplanade, where music plays while Serene Highness is pleased to eat his victuals, down to the low lane, where in her door-sill the aged widow, knitting for a thin livelihood, sits to feel the afternoon sun; I see it all; for, except the Schlosskirche weather-cock, no biped stands so high. Couriers arrive bestrapped and bebooted, bearing Joy and Sorrow bagged up in pouches of leather: there, top-laden, and with four swift horses, rolls in the country Baron and his household; here, on timber-leg, the lamed Soldier hops painfully along, begging alms: a thousand carriages, and wains, and cars, come tumbling in with Food, with young Rusticity, and other Raw Produce, inanimate or animate, and go tumbling out again with produce manufactured. That living flood, pouring through these streets, of all qualities and ages, knowest thou whence it is coming, whither it is going? *Aus der Ewigkeit zu der Ewigkeit hin:* From Eternity, onwards to Eternity! These are Apparitions: what else? Are they not Souls rendered visible: in Bodies, that took shape and will lose it, melting into air? Their solid Pavement is a Picture of the Sense; they walk on the bosom of Nothing, blank Time is behind them and before them. Or fanciest thou, the red and yellow

The Watch-Tower

Clothes-screen yonder, with spurs on its heels and feather in its crown, is but of To-day, without a Yesterday or a To-morrow ; and had not rather its Ancestor alive when Hengst and Horsa overran thy Island ? Friend, thou seest here a living link in that Tissue of History, which inweaves all Being : watch well, or it will be past thee, and seen no more."

"*Ach, mein Lieber !*" said he once, at midnight, when we had returned from the Coffee-house in rather earnest talk, "it is a true sublimity to dwell here. These fringes of lamp-light, struggling up through smoke and thousand-fold exhalation, some fathoms into the ancient reign of Night, what thinks Boötes of them, as he leads his Hunting-Dogs over the Zenith in their leash of siderial fire ? That stifled hum of Midnight, when Traffic has lain down to rest ; and the chariot-wheels of Vanity, still rolling here and there through distant streets, are bearing her to Halls roofed in, and lighted to the due pitch for her ; and only Vice and Misery, to prowl or to moan like nightbirds, are abroad : that hum, I say, like the stertorous, unquiet slumber of sick Life, is heard in Heaven ! Oh, under that hideous coverlet of vapors, and putrefaction, and unimaginable gases, what a Fermenting-vat lies simmering and hid ! The

The Watch-Tower

joyful and the sorrowful are there ; men are dying there, men are being born ; men are praying,—on the other side of a brick partition, men are cursing ; and around them all is the vast, void Night. The proud Grandee still lingers in his perfumed saloons, or reposes within damask curtains ; Wretchedness cowers into truckle-beds, or shivers hunger-stricken into its lair of straw : in obscure cellars, *Rouge-t-Noir* languidly emits its voice-of-destiny to haggard hungry Villains ; while Councillors of State sit plotting, and playing their high chess-game, whereof the pawns are Men. The Lover whispers his mistress that the coach is ready ; and she, full of hope and fear, glides down, to fly with him over the borders : the Thief, still more silently, sets to his picklocks and crowbars, or lurks in wait till the watchmen first snore in their boxes. Gay mansions, with supper-rooms and dancing-rooms, are full of light and music and high-swelling hearts ; but, in the Condemned Cells, the pulse of life beats tremulous and faint, and bloodshot eyes look through the darkness, which is around and within, for the light of a stern last morning. Six men are to be hanged on the morrow : comes no hammering from the *Rabenstein*?—their gallows must even now be o'building. Upwards of

The Watch-Tower

five hundred thousand two-legged animals without feathers lie round us, in horizontal position ; their heads all in nightcaps, and full of the foolishest dreams. Riot cries aloud, and staggers and swaggers in his rank dens of shame ; and the Mother, with streaming hair, kneels over her pallid dying infant, whose cracked lips only her tears now moisten. —All these heaped and huddled together, with nothing but a little carpentry and masonry between them ;—crammed in, like salted fish in their barrel ;—or weltering, shall I say, like an Egyptian pitcher of tamed vipers, each struggling to get its *head above* the others : *such* work goes on under that smoke-counterpane !—But I, *mein Werther*, sit above it all ; I am alone with the stars.”

We looked in his face to see whether, in the utterance of such extraordinary Night-thoughts, no feeling might be traced there ; but with the light we had, which indeed was only a single tallow-light, and far enough from the window, nothing save that old calmness and fixedness was visible.

The Everlasting No*

UNDER the strange nebulous envelopment, wherein our Professor has now shrouded himself, no doubt but his spiritual nature is nevertheless progressive, and growing : for how can the "Son of Time," in any case, stand still ? We behold him, through those dim years, in a state of crisis, of transition : his mad Pilgrimings, and general solution into aimless Discontinuity, what is all this but a mad Fermentation ; wherefrom the fiercer it is, the clearer product will one day evolve itself.

Such transitions are ever full of pain : thus the Eagle when he moults is sickly ; and, to attain his new beak, must harshly dash off the old one upon rocks. What Stoicism soever our Wanderer, in his individual acts and motions, may affect, it is clear that there is a hot fever of anarchy and misery raging within ; coruscations of which flash out : as, indeed, how could there be other ? Have we not seen him disappointed, bemocked of Destiny, through long years ? All that the

* *Sartor Resartus*, book ii., chap. vii.

The Everlasting No

young heart might desire and pray for has been denied ; nay, as in the last worst instance, offered and then snatched away. Ever an “excellent Passivity ;” but of useful, reasonable Activity, essential to the former as Food to Hunger, nothing granted : till at length, in this wild Pilgrimage, he must forcibly seize for himself an Activity, though useless, unreasonable. Alas, his cup of bitterness, which had been filling drop by drop, ever since that first “ruddy morning” in the Hinterschlag Gymnasium, was at the very lip ; and then with that poison-drop, of the Towgood-and-Blumine business, it runs over, and even hisses over in a deluge of foam.

He himself says once, with more justness than originality : “ Man is, properly speaking, based upon Hope, he has no other possession but Hope ; this world of his is emphatically the Place of Hope.” What then, was our Professor’s possession ? We see him, for the present, quite shut out from Hope ; looking not into the golden orient, but vaguely all round into a dim copper firmament, pregnant with earthquake and tornado.

Alas, shut out from Hope, in a deeper sense than we yet dream of ! For, as he wanders wearisomely through this world, he has now lost all tidings of another and higher. Full

The Everlasting No

of religion, or at least of religiosity, as our Friend has since exhibited himself, he hides not that, in those days, he was wholly irreligious : "Doubt had darkened into Unbelief," says he ; "shade after shade goes grimly over your soul, till you have the fixed, starless, Tartarean black." To such readers as have reflected, what can be called reflecting, on man's life, and happily discovered, in contradiction to much Profit-and-Loss Philosophy, speculative and practical, that Soul is *not* synonymous with Stomach ; who understand, therefore, in our Friend's words, "that, for man's well-being, Faith is properly the one thing needful ; how, with it, Martyrs, otherwise weak, can cheerfully endure the shame and the cross ; and without it, Worldlings puke up their sick existence, by suicide, in the midst of luxury :" to such it will be clear that, for a pure moral nature, the loss of his religious Belief was the loss of everything. Unhappy young man ! All wounds, the *crush* of long-continued Destitution, the stab of false Friendship and of false Love, all wounds in thy so genial heart, would have healed again, had not its life-warmth been withdrawn. Well might he exclaim, in his wild way : "Is there no God, then ; but at best an absentee God, sitting idle, ever since the first Sabbath,

The Everlasting No

at the outside of his Universe, and *seeing it go*? Has the word Duty no meaning; is what we call Duty no divine Messenger and Guide, but a false earthly Phantasm, made up of Desire and Fear, of emanations from the Gallows and from Doctor Graham's Celestial-Bed? Happiness of an approving Conscience! Did not Paul of Tarsus, whom admiring men have since named Saint, feel that *he* was 'the chief of sinners;' and Nero of Rome, jocund in spirit (*wohlgemuth*), spend much of his time in fiddling? Foolish Wordmonger and Motive-grinder, who in thy Logic-mill hast an earthly mechanism for the Godlife itself, and wouldst fain grind me out Virtue from the husks of Pleasure,—I tell thee, Nay! To the unregenerate Prometheus Vinctus of a man, it is ever the bitterest aggravation of his wretchedness that he is conscious of Virtue, that he feels himself the victim not of suffering only, but of injustice. What then? Is the heroic inspiration we name Virtue but some Passion; some bubble of the blood, bubbling in the direction others *profit* by? I know not: only this I know, If what thou namest Happiness be our true aim, then are we all astray. With Stupidity and sound Digestion man may front much. But what, in these dull unimaginative days, are the

The Everlasting No

terrors of Conscience to the diseases of the Liver ! Not on Morality, but on Cookery, let us build our stronghold : there brandishing our frying-pan, as censer, let us offer sweet incense to the Devil, and live at ease on the fat things *he* has provided for his Elect !”

Thus has the bewildered Wanderer to stand, as so many have done, shouting question after question into the Sibyl-cave of Destiny, and receive no Answer but an Echo. It is all a grim Desert, this once-fair world of his ; wherein is heard only the howling of wild beasts, or the shrieks of despairing, hate-filled men ; and no Pillar of Cloud by day, and no Pillar of Fire by night, any longer guides the Pilgrim. To such length has the spirit of Inquiry carried him. “But what boots it (*was thul's*) ?” cries he : “it is but the common lot in this era. Not having come to spiritual majority prior to the *Siecle de Louis Quinze*, and not being born purely a Loghead (*Dummkopf*) thou hadst no other outlook. The whole world is, like thee, sold to Unbelief ; their old Temples of the Godhead which for long have not been rain-proof, crumble down ; and men ask now : Where is the Godhead ; our eyes never saw him ?”

Pitiful enough were it, for all these wild

The Everlasting No

utterances, to call our Diogenes wicked. Unprofitable servants as we all are, perhaps at no era of his life was he more decisively the Servant of Goodness, the Servant of God, than even now when doubting God's existence. "One circumstance I note," says he; "after all the nameless wo that Inquiry, which for me, what it is not always, was genuine Love of Truth, had wrought me, I nevertheless still loved Truth, and would bate no jot of my allegiance to her. 'Truth!' I cried, 'though the Heavens crush me for following her: no Falsehood! though a whole celestial Lubberland were the price of Apostasy.' In conduct it was the same. Had a divine Messenger from the clouds, or a miraculous Handwriting on the wall, convincingly proclaimed to me *This thou shalt do*, with what passionate readiness, as I often thought, would I have done it, had it been leaping into the infernal Fire. Thus, in spite of all Motive-grinders, and Mechanical Profit-and-Loss Philosophies, with the sick ophthalmia and hallucination they had brought on, was the Infinite nature of Duty still dimly present to me: living without God in the world, of God's light I was not utterly bereft; if my as yet sealed eyes, with their unspeakable longing, could nowhere see Him, nevertheless in my heart He was

The Everlasting No

present, and His heaven-written Law still stood legible and sacred there."

Meanwhile, under all these tribulations, and temporal and spiritual destitutions, what must the Wanderer, in his silent soul, have endured ! "The painfulest feelings," writes he, "is that of your own Feebleness (*Un-kraft*) ; ever, as the English Milton says, to be weak is the true misery. And yet of your Strength there is and can be no clear feeling, save by what you have prospered in, by what you have done. Between vague wavering Capability and fixed indubitable Performance, what a difference ! A certain inarticulate Self-consciousness dwells dimly in us ; which only our Works can render articulate and decisively discernible. Our Works are the mirror wherein the spirit first sees its natural lineaments. Hence, too, the folly of that impossible Precept, *Know thyself*; till it be translated into this partially possible one, *Know what thou canst work at.*

"But for me, so strangely unprosperous had I been, the net-result of my Workings amounted as yet simply to—Nothing. How then could I believe in my Strength, when there was as yet no mirror to see it in ? Ever did this agitating, yet, as I now perceive, quite frivolous question, remain to me insoluble :

The Everlasting No

Hast thou a certain Faculty, a certain Worth, such even as the most have not ; or art thou the completest Dullard of these modern times ? Alas, the fearful Unbelief is disbelief in yourself ; and how could I believe ? Had not my first, last Faith in myself, when even to me the Heavens seemed laid open, and I dared to love, been all too cruelly belied ? The speculative Mystery of Life grew ever more mysterious to me : neither in the practical Mystery had I made the slightest progress, but been everywhere buffeted, foiled, and contemptuously cast out. A feeble unit in the middle of a threatening Infinitude, I seemed to have nothing given me but eyes, whereby to discern my own wretchedness. Invisible yet impenetrable walls, as of Enchantment, divided me from all living : was there, in the wide world, any true bosom I could press trustfully to mine ? O Heaven, No, there was none ! I kept a lock upon my lips : why should I speak much with that shifting variety of so-called Friends, in whose withered, vain and too-hungry souls Friendship was but an incredible tradition ? In such cases, your resource is to talk little, and that little mostly from the Newspapers. Now when I look back, it was a strange isolation I then lived in. The men and women around me, even

The Everlasting No

speaking with me, were but Figures ; I had, practically, forgotten that they were alive, that they were not merely automatic. In the midst of their crowded streets and assemblages, I walked solitary ; and (except as it was my own heart, not another's, that I kept devouring) savage also, as the tiger in his jungle. Some comfort it would have been, could I, like a Faust, have fancied myself tempted and tormented of the Devil ; for a Hell, as I imagined, without Life, though only diabolic Life, were more frightful : but in our age of Down-pulling and Disbelief, the very Devil has been pulled down, you cannot so much as believe in a Devil. To me the Universe was all void of Life, of Purpose, of Volition, even of Hostility : it was one huge, dead, immeasurable Steam-engine, rolling on, in its dead indifference, to grind me limb from limb. Oh, the vast, gloomy, solitary Golgotha, and Mill of Death ! Why was the Living banished thither companionless, conscious ? Why, if there is no Devil ; nay, unless the Devil is your God ? "

A prey incessantly to such corrosions, might not, moreover, as the worst aggravation to them, the iron constitution even of a Teufels-dröckh threaten to fail ? We conjecture that he has known sickness ; and, in spite of his

The Everlasting No

locomotive habits, perhaps sickness of the chronic sort. Hear this, for example : " How beautiful to die of broken-heart, on Paper ! Quite another thing in practice ; every window of your Feeling, even of your Intellect, as it were, begrimed and mud-bespattered, so that no pure ray can enter ; a whole Drug-shop in your inwards ; the fordone soul drowning slowly in quagmires of Disgust ! "

Putting all which external and internal miseries together, may we not find in the following sentences, quite in our Professor's still vein, significance enough ? " From Suicide a certain after-shine (*Nachschein*) of Christianity withheld me : perhaps also a certain indolence of character ; for, was not that a remedy I had at any time within reach ? Often, however, was there a question present to me : Should some one now, at the turning of that corner, blow thee suddenly out of Space, into the other World, or other No-world, by pistol-shot,—how were it ? On which ground, too, I have often, in sea-storms and sieged cities and other death-scenes, exhibited an imperturbability, which passed, falsely enough, for courage."

" So had it lasted," concludes the Wanderer, " so had it lasted, as in bitter protracted Death-agony, through long years. The heart

The Everlasting No

within me, unvisited by any heavenly dew-drop, was smoldering in sulphurous, slow-consuming fire. Almost since earliest memory I had shed no tear; or once only when I, murmuring half-audibly, recited Faust's Death-song, that wild *Selig der den er im Siegesglanze findet* (Happy whom he finds in Battle's splendor), and thought that of this last Friend even I was not forsaken, that Destiny itself could not doom me not to die. Having no hope, neither had I any definite fear, were it of Man or of Devil: nay, I often felt as if it might be solacing, could the Arch-Devil himself, though in Tartarean terrors, but rise to me, that I might tell him a little of my mind. And yet, strangely enough, I lived in a continual, indefinite, pining fear; tremulous, pusillanimous, apprehensive of I knew not what: it seemed as if all things in the Heavens above and the Earth beneath would hurt me; as if the Heavens and the Earth were but boundless jaws of a devouring monster, wherein I, palpitating, waited to be devoured.

"Full of such humor, and perhaps the miserablest man in the whole French Capitol or Suburbs, was I, one sultry Dog-day, after much perambulation, toiling along the dirty little *Rue Saint-Thomas de l'Enfer*, among

The Everlasting No

civic rubbish enough, in a close atmosphere, and over pavements hot as Nebuchadnezzar's Furnace ; whereby doubtless my spirits were little cheered ; when, all at once, there rose a Thought in me, and I asked myself : ' What *art thou* afraid of ? Wherefore, like a coward, does thou forever pip and whimper, and go cowering and trembling ? Despicable biped ! what is the sum-total of the worst that lies before thee ? Death ? Well, Death ; and say the pangs of Tophet too, and all that the Devil and Man may, will, or can do against thee ! Hast thou not a heart ; canst thou not suffer whatsoever it be ; and, as a Child of Freedom, though outcast, trample Tophet itself under thy feet, while it consumes thee ? Let it come, then ; I will meet it and defy it ! ' And as I so thought, there rushed like a stream of fire over my whole soul ; and I shook base Fear away from me forever. I was strong, of unknown strength ; a spirit, almost a god. Ever from that time, the temper of my misery was changed : not Fear or whining Sorrow was it, but Indignation and grim fire-eyed Defiance.

" Thus had the EVERLASTING NO (*das ewige Nein*) pealed authoritatively through all the recesses of my Being, of my ME ; and then was it that my whole ME stood up, in

The Everlasting No

native God-created majesty, and with emphasis recorded its Protest. Such a Protest, the most important transaction in Life, may that same Indignation and Defiance, in a psychological point of view, be fitly called. The Everlasting No had said : 'Behold, thou art fatherless, outcast, and the Universe is mine (the Devil's) ;' to which my whole Me now made answer : '*I am not thine, but Free, and forever hate thee !*'

"It is from this hour that I incline to date my Spiritual New-birth, or Baphometic Fire-baptism ; perhaps I directly thereupon began to be a Man."

Ghosts *

" Again, could anything be more miraculous than an actual authentic Ghost ? The English Johnson longed, all his life, to see one ; but could not, though he went to Cock Lane, and thence to the church-vaults, and tapped on coffins. Foolish Doctor ! Did he never, with the mind's eye as well as with the body's, look round him into that full tide of human Life he so loved ; did he never so much as look into Himself ? The good Doctor was a Ghost, as actual and authentic as heart could wish ; well-nigh a million of Ghosts were traveling the streets by his side. Once more I say, sweep away the illusion of Time ; compress the threescore years into three minutes : what else was he, what else are we ? Are we not Spirits, that are shaped into a body, into an Appearance ; and that fade away again into air and Invisibility ? This is no metaphor, it is a simple scientific *fact* : we start out of Nothingness, take figure, and are Apparitions ; round us, as round the veriest specter, is Eternity ; and to Eternity minutes are as

* *Sartor Resartus*, book iii., chap. viii.

Ghosts

years and æons. Come there not tones of Love and Faith, as from celestial harp-strings, like the Song of beatified Souls? And again, do not we squeak and gibber (in our discordant, screech-owlish debatings and re-criminatings); and glide bodeful, and feeble, and fearful; or uproar (*poltern*), and revel in our mad Dance of the Dead,—till the scent of the morning air summons us to our still Home; and dreamy Night becomes awake and Day? Where now is Alexander of Macedon: does the steel Host, that yelled in fierce battle-shouts at Issus and Arbela, remain behind him; or have they all vanished utterly, even as perturbed Goblins must? Napoleon too, and his Moscow Retreats and Austerlitz Campaigns! Was it all other than the veriest Specter-hunt; which has now, with its howling tumult that made Night hideous, flitted away?—Ghosts! There are nigh a thousand million walking the Earth openly at noon-tide; some half-hundred have vanished from it, some half-hundred have arisen in it, ere thy watch ticks once.

“O Heaven, it is mysterious, it is awful to consider that we not only carry each a future Ghost within him; but are, in very deed, Ghosts! These Limbs, whence had we them; this stormy Force; this life-blood with its

Ghosts

burning Passion ? They are dust and shadow ; a shadow-system gathered round our ME : wherein, through some moments or years, the Divine Essence is to be revealed in the Flesh. That warrior on his strong war-horse, fire flashes through his eyes ; force dwells in his arm and heart, but warrior and war-horse are a vision ; a revealed Force, nothing more. Stately they tread the Earth, as if it were a firm substance ; fool ! the Earth is but a film ; it cracks in twain, and warrior and war-horse sink beyond plummet's sounding. Plummet's ? Fantasy herself will not follow them. A little while ago, they were not ; a little while, and they are not, their very ashes are not.

"So has it been from the beginning, so will it be to the end. Generation after generation takes to itself the Form of a Body ; and forth issuing from Cimmerian Night, on Heaven's mission APPEARS. What Force and Fire is in each he expends : one grinding in the mill of Industry ; one hunter-like climbing the giddy Alpine heights of Science ; one madly dashed in pieces on the rocks of Strife, in war with his fellow :—and then the Heaven-sent is recalled ; his earthly Vesture falls away, and soon even to Sense becomes a vanished Shadow. Thus, like some wild-

Ghosts

flaming, wild-thundering train of Heaven's Artillery, does this mysterious MANKIND thunder and flame, in long-drawn, quick-successing grandeur, through the unknown Deep. Thus, like a God-created, fire-breathing Spirit-host, we emerge from the Inane ; haste stormfully across the astonished Earth ; then plunge again into the Inane. Earth's mountains are leveled, and her seas filled up, in our passage : can the Earth, which is but dead and a vision, resist Spirits which have reality and are alive ? On the hardest adamant some footprint of us is stamped in ; the last Rear of the host will read traces of the earliest Van. But whence ?—O Heaven, whither ? Sense knows not ; Faith knows not ; only that it is through Mystery to Mystery, from God and to God,

‘*We are such stuff
As Dreams are made of, and our little Life
Is rounded with a sleep !*’”

Labor*

FOR there is a perennial nobleness, and even sacredness, in Work. Were he never so benighted, forgetful of his high calling, there is always hope in a man that actually and earnestly works: in Idleness alone is there perpetual despair. Work, never so Mammonish, mean, *is* in communication with Nature; the real desire to get Work done will itself lead one more and more to truth, to Nature's appointments and regulations, which are truth.

The latest Gospel in this world is, Know thy work and do it. "Know thyself :" long enough has that poor "self" of thine tormented thee ; thou wilt never get to "know" it, I believe ! Think it not thy business, this of knowing thyself: thou art an unknowable individual : know what thou canst work at ; and work at it, like a Hercules ! That will be thy better plan.

It has been written, "an endless significance lies in Work ;" a man perfects himself by working. Foul jungles are cleared away,

* *Past and Present*, book iii., chap. xi.

Labor

fair seed-fields rise instead, and stately cities ; and withal the man himself first ceases to be jungle and foul unwholesome desert thereby. Consider how, even in the meanest sorts of Labor, the whole soul of a man is composed into a kind of real harmony, the instant he sets himself to work ! Doubt, Desire, Sorrow, Remorse, Indignation, Despair itself, all these like hell-dogs lie beleaguering the soul of the poor dayworker, as of every man : but he bends himself with free valor against his task, and all these are stilled, all these shrink murmuring far off into their caves. The man is now a man. The blessed glow of Labor in him, is it not as purifying fire, wherein all poison is burnt up, and of sour smoke itself there is made bright blessed flame !

Destiny, on the whole, has no other way of cultivating us. A formless Chaos once set it revolving, grows round and even rounder ; ranges itself, by mere force of gravity, into strata, spherical courses ; is no longer a Chaos, but a round compacted World. What would become of the Earth, did she cease to revolve ? In the poor old Earth, so long as she revolves, all inequalities, irregularities disperse themselves ; all irregularities are incessantly becoming regular. Hast thou looked on the Potter's wheel,—one of the venerablest objects;

Labor

old as the Prophet Ezechiel and far older ? Rude lumps of clay, how they spin themselves up, by mere quick whirling, into beautiful circular dishes. And fancy the most assiduous Potter, but without his wheel ; reduced to make dishes, or rather amorphous botches, by mere kneading and baking ! Even such a Potter were Destiny, with a human soul that would rest and lie at ease, that would not work and spin ! Of an idle unrevolving man the kindest Destiny, like the most assiduous Potter without wheel, can bake and knead nothing other than a botch ; let her spend on him what expensive coloring, what gilding and enameling she will, he is but a botch. Not a dish ; no, a bulging, kneaded, crooked, shambling, squint-cornered, amorphous botch,—a mere enameled vessel of dis-honor ! Let the idle think of this.

Blessed is he who has found his work ; let him ask no other blessedness. He has a work, a life-purpose ; he has found it, and will follow it ! How, as a free-flowing channel, dug and torn by noble force through the sour mud-swamp of one's existence, like an ever-deepening river there, it runs and flows ; —draining off the sour festering water, gradually from the root of the remotest grass-blade ; making, instead of pestilential swamp, a green

Labor

fruitful meadow with its clear-flowing stream. How blessed for the meadow itself, let the stream and *its* value be great or small ! Labor is Life ; from the inmost heart of the Worker rises his god-given Force, the sacred celestial Life-essence breathed into him by Almighty God ; from his inmost heart awakens him to all nobleness,—to all knowledge, "self-knowledge" and much else, so soon as Work fitly begins. Knowledge ? The knowledge that will hold good in working, cleave thou to that ; for Nature herself accredits that, says Yea to that. Properly thou hast no other knowledge but what thou hast got by working : the rest is yet all a hypothesis of knowledge ; a thing to be argued of in schools, a thing floating in the clouds, in endless logic-vortices, till we try it and fix it. "Doubt, of whatever kind, can be ended by Action alone."

And again, hast thou valued Patience, Courage, Perseverance, Openness to light ; readiness to own thyself mistaken, to do better next time ? All these, all virtues, in wrestling with the dim brute Powers of Fact, in ordering of thy fellows in such wrestle, there and elsewhere not at all, thou wilt continually learn. Set down a brave Sir Christopher in

Labor

the middle of black ruined Stoneheaps, of foolish unarchitectural Bishops, redtape Officials, idle Nell-Gwyn Defenders of the Faith ; and see whether he will ever raise a Paul's Cathedral out of all that, yea or no ! Rough, rude, contradictory are all things and persons, from the mutinous masons and Irish hodmen, up to the idle Nell-Gwyn Defenders, to blustering redtape Officials, foolish unarchitectural Bishops. All these things and persons are there not for Christopher's sake and his Cathedral's ; they are there for their own sake mainly ! Christopher will have to conquer and constrain all these,—if he be able. All these are against him. Equitable Nature herself, who carries her mathematics and architeconics not on the face of her, but deep in the hidden heart of her,—Nature herself is but partially for him ; will be wholly against him, if he constrain her not ! His very money, where is it to come from ? The pious munificence of England lies far-scattered, distant, unable to speak, and say, " I am here ; "—must be spoken to before it can speak. Pious munificence, and all help, is so silent, invisible like the gods ; impediments, contradictions manifold are so loud and near ! O brave Sir Christopher, trust thou in those, notwithstanding, and front all these ; understand all these ; by

Labor

valiant patience, noble effort, insight by man's-strength, vanquish and compel all these,—and, on the whole, strike down victoriously the last topstone of that Paul's Edifice : thy monument for certain centuries, the stamp "Great Man" impressed very legibly on Portland-stone there !

Yes, all manner of help, and pious response from Men of Nature, is always what we call silent ; cannot speak or come to light, till it be seen, till it be spoken to. Every noble work is at first "impossible." In very truth, for every noble work the possibilities will lie diffused through Immensity ; inarticulate, undiscoverable except to faith. Like Gideon thou shalt spread out thy fleece at the door of thy tent ; see whether under the wide arch of Heaven there be any bounteous moisture, or none. Thy heart and life-purpose shall be as a miraculous Gideon's fleece, spread out in silent appeal to Heaven ; and from the kind Immensities, what from the poor unkind Localities and town and country Parishes there never could, blessed dew-moisture to suffice thee shall have fallen !

Work is of a religious nature :—work is of a *brave* nature ; which it is the aim of all religion to be. All work of man is as the swimmer's ; a waste ocean threatens to devour

Labor

him ; if he front it not bravely, it will keep its word. By incessant wise defiance of it, lusty rebuke and buffet of it, behold how it loyally supports him, bears him as its conqueror along. "It is so," says Goethe, "with all things that man undertakes in this world."

Brave Sea-captain, Norse Sea-king,—Columbus, my hero, royalest Sea-king of all ! it is no friendly environment this of thine, in the waste deep waters ; around thee mutinous discouraged souls, behind thee disgrace and ruin, before thee the unpenetrated veil of Night. Brother, these wild water-mountains, bounding from their deep basin (ten miles deep, I am told), are not entirely there on thy behalf ! Meseems *they* have other work than floating thee forward :—and the huge Winds, that sweep from Ursa Major to the Tropics and Equators, dancing their giant-waltz through the kingdoms of Chaos and Immensity, they care little about filling rightly or filling wrongly the small shoulder-of-mutton sails in this cockle-skiff of thine ! Thou are not among articulate-speaking friends, my brother ; thou art among immeasurable dumb monsters, tumbling, howling wide as the world here. Secret, far off, invisible to all hearts, but thine, there lies a help in them : see how thou wilt get at that. Patiently thou wilt

Labor

wait till the mad Southwester spend itself, saving thyself by dexterous science of defense, the while : valiantly, with swift decision, wilt thou strike in, when the favoring East, the Possible, springs up. Mutiny of men thou wilt sternly repress ; weakness, despondency, thou wilt cheerily encourage : thou wilt swallow down complaint, unreason, weariness, weakness of others and thyself ;—how much wilt thou swallow down ! There shall be a depth of Silence in thee, deeper than this Sea, which is but ten miles deep : a Silence unsoundable ; known to God only. Thou shalt be a great Man. Yes, my World-Soldier, thou of the World Marine-service,—thou wilt have to be *greater* than this tumultuous unmeasured World here round thee is ; thou, in thy strong soul, as with wrestler's arms, shalt embrace it, harness it down ; and make it bear thee on,—to new Americas, or whither God wills !

Reward*

"RELIGION," I said ; for properly speaking, all true Work is Religion : and whatsoever Religion is not Work may go and dwell among the Brahmins, Antinomians, Spinning Dervishes, or where it will ; with me it shall have no harbor. Admirable was that of the old Monks, "*Laborare est Orare*, Work is Worship."

Older than all preached Gospels was this unpreached, inarticulate but ineradicable, forever-enduring Gospel : Work, and therein have well being. Man, son of Earth and of Heaven, lies there not, in the innermost heart of thee, a Spirit of active Method, a Force for work ;—and burns like a painfully smoldering fire, giving thee no rest till thou unfold it, till thou write it down in beneficent Facts around thee ! What is immethodic, waste, thou shalt make methodic, regulated, arable ; obedient and productive to thee. Wheresoever thou findest Disorder, there is thy eternal enemy ; attack him swiftly, subdue him ; make Order of him, the subject not of Chaos,

* *Past and Present*, book iii., chap. xii.

Reward

but of Intelligence, Divinity and Thee ! The thistle that grows in thy path, dig it out, that a blade of useful grass, a drop of nourishing milk, may grow there instead. The waste cotton-shrub, gather its waste white down, spin it, weave it ; that, in place of idle litter, there may be folded webs, and the naked skin of man be covered.

But above all, where thou findest Ignorance, Stupidity, Brute-mindedness,—yes, there, with or without Church-tithes and Shovel-hat, with or without Talfourd-Mahon Copyrights, or were it with mere dungeons and gibbets and crosses, attack it, I say ; smite it wisely, unwearily, and rest not while thou livest and it lives ; but smite, smite, in the name of God ! The Highest God, as I understand it, does audibly so command thee ; still audibly, if thou have ears to hear. He, even He, with his *unspoken* voice, awfuler than any Sinai thunders or syllabled speech of Whirlwinds ; for the SILENCE of deep Eternities of Worlds from beyond the morning-stars, does it not speak to thee ? The unborn Ages ; the old Graves, with their long-moldering dust, the very tears that wetted it now all dry,—do not these speak to thee, what ear hath not heard ? The deep Death-kingdoms, the Stars in their never-resting courses, all Space and all Time,

Reward

proclaim it to thee in continual silent admonition. Thou, too, if ever man should, shalt work while it is called To-day. For the Night cometh, wherein no man can work.

All true Work is sacred ; in all true Work, were it but true hand-labor, there is something of divineness. Labor, wide as the Earth, has its summit in Heaven. Sweat of the brow ; and up from that to sweat of the brain, sweat of the heart ; which includes all Kepler calculations, Newton meditations, all Sciences, all spoken Epics, all acted Heroisms, Martyrdoms,—up to that “Agony of bloody sweat,” which all men have called divine ! O brother, if this is not “worship,” then I say, the more pity for worship ; for this is the noblest thing yet discovered under God’s sky. Who art thou that complainest of thy life of toil ? Complain not. Look up, my wearied brother : see thy fellow Workmen there, in God’s Eternity ; surviving there, they alone surviving : sacred Band of the Immortals, celestial Bodyguard of the Empire of Mankind. Even in the weak Human Memory they survive so long, as saints, as heroes, as gods ; they alone surviving ; peopling, they alone, the unmeasured solitudes of Time ! To Thee Heaven, though severe, is *not* unkind ; Heaven is kind,—as a noble Mother ;

Reward

as that Spartan Mother, saying while she gave her son his shield, "With it, my son, or upon it!" Thou too, shalt return *home* in honor; to thy far-distant Home, in honor; doubt it not,—if in the battle thou keep thy shield! Thou, in the Eternities and deepest Death-kingdoms, are not an alien; thou everywhere art a denizen! Complain not; the very Spartans did not *complain*.

And who art thou that braggest of thy life of Idleness; complacently shewest thy bright gilt equipages; sumptuous cushions; appliances for folding of the hands to mere sleep? Looking up, looking down, around, behind or before, discernest thou, if it be not in Mayfair alone, any *idle* hero, saint, god, or even devil? Not a vestige of one. In the Heavens, in the Earth, in the Waters under the Earth, is none like unto thee. Thou art an original figure in this Creation; a denizen in Mayfair alone, in this extraordinary Century or Half-Century alone! One monster there is in the world: the idle man. What is his "Religion?" That Nature is a Phantasm, where cunning beggary or thievery may sometimes find good victual. That God is a lie; and that Man and his Life are a lie.—Alas, alas, who of us *is* there that can say, I have worked? The faithfulest of us are unprofitable servants; the

Reward

faithfulest of us know that best. The faithfulest of us may say, with sad and true old Samuel, "much of my life has been trifled away!" But he that has, and except "on public occasions" professes to have, no function but that of going idle in a graceful or graceless manner; and of begetting sons to go idle; and to address Chief Spinners and Diggers, who at least *are* spinning and digging, "Ye scandalous persons who produce too much"—My Corn-Law Friends, on what imaginary still richer Eldorados, and true iron-spikes with law of gravitation, are ye rushing!

As to the Wages of Work there might innumerable things be said; there will and must yet innumerable things be said and spoken, in St. Stephen's and out of St. Stephen's; and gradually not a few things be ascertained and written, on Law-parchment, concerning this very matter:—"Fair day's-wages for a fair day's-work" is the most unrefusable demand! Money-wages "to the extent of keeping your worker alive that he may work more;" these, unless you mean to dismiss him straightway out of this world, are indispensable alike to the noblest Worker and to the least noble!

Reward

One thing only I will say here, in special reference to the former class, the noble and noblest ; but throwing light on all the other classes and their arrangements of this difficult matter : The "wages" of every noble Work do yet lie in Heaven or else Nowhere. Not in Bank-of-England bills, in Owen's Labor-bank, or any the most improved establishment of banking and money-changing, needest thou, heroic soul, present thy account of earnings. Human banks and labor-banks know thee not ; or know thee after generations and centuries have passed away, and thou art clean gone from "rewarding,"—all manner of bank-drafts, shop-tills, and Downing-Street Exchequers lying very invisible, so far from thee ! Nay, at bottom, dost thou need any reward ? Was it thy aim and life-purpose to be filled with good things for thy heroism ; to have a life of pomp and ease, and be what men call "happy," in this world, or in any other world ? I answer for thee deliberately, No. The whole spiritual secret of the new epoch lies in this, that thou canst answer for thyself, with thy whole clearness of head and heart, deliberately, No !

My brother, the brave man has to give his Life away. Give it, I advise thee ;—thou dost not expect to *sell* thy Life in an adequate

Reward

manner? What price, for example, would content thee? The just price of thy LIFE to thee,—why, God's entire Creation to thyself, the whole Universe of Space, the whole Eternity of Time, and what they hold: that is the price which would content thee; that, and if thou wilt be candid, nothing short of that! It is thy all; and for it thou wouldest have all. Thou art an unreasonable mortal; —or rather thou art a poor *infinite* mortal, who, in thy narrow clay-prison here, *seemest* so unreasonable! Thou wilt never sell thy Life, or any part of thy Life, in a satisfactory manner. Give it, like a royal heart; let the price be Nothing: thou *hast* then, in a certain sense, got All for it! The heroic man,—and is not every man, God be thanked, a potential hero?—has to do so, in all times and circumstances. In the most heroic age, as in the most unheroic, he will have to say, as Burns said proudly and humbly of his little Scottish Songs, little dewdrops of Celestial Melody in an age when so much was unmelodious: “By Heaven, they shall either be invaluable or of no value; I do not need your guineas for them!” It is an element which should, and must, enter deeply into all settlements of wages here below. They never will be “satisfactory” otherwise; they cannot, O

Reward

Mammon Gospel, they never can ! Money for my little piece of work "to the extent that will allow me to keep working ;" yes, this,—unless you mean that I shall go my ways *before* the work is all taken out of me : but as to "wages"—!—

On the whole, we do entirely agree with those old Monks, *Laborare est Orare*. In a thousand senses, from one end of it to the other, true Work *is* Worship. He that works, whatsoever be his work, he bodies forth the form of Things Unseen ; a small Poet every Worker is. The idea, were it but of his poor Delf Platter, how much more of his Epic Poem, is as yet "seen," half-seen, only by himself ; to all others it is a thing unseen, impossible ; to Nature herself it is a thing unseen, a thing which never hitherto was ;—very "impossible," for it is as yet a No-thing ! The Unseen Powers had need to watch over such a man ; he works in and for the Unseen. Alas, if he look to the Seen Powers only, he may as well quit the business ; his No-thing will never rightly issue as a Thing, but as a Deceptivity, a Sham-thing,—which it had better not do !

Thy No-thing of an Intended Poem, O Poet who hast looked merely to reviewers, copy-rights, booksellers, popularities, behold it has

Reward

not yet become a thing ; for the truth is not in it ! Though printed, hotpressed, reviewed, celebrated, sold to the twentieth edition : what is all that ? The Thing, in philosophical uncommercial language: is still a No-thing, mostly semblance, and deception of the sight ; —benign Oblivion incessantly gnawing at it, impatient till Chaos to which it belongs do reabsorb it !—

He who takes not counsel of the Unseen and Silent, from him will never come real disability and speech. Thou must descend to the *Mothers*, to the *Manes*, and Hercules-like long suffer and labor there, wouldst thou emerge with victory into the sunlight. As in battle and the shock of war,—for is not this a battle ?— thou too shalt fear no pain or death, shalt love no ease or life ; the voice of festive Lubberlands, the noise of greedy Acheron shall alike lie silent under thy victorious feet. Thy work, like Dante's, shall “ make thee lean for many years.” The world and its wages, its criticisms, counsels, helps, impediments, shall be as a waste ocean-flood ; the chaos through which thou art to swim and sail. Not the waste waves and their weedy gulf-streams, shalt thou take for guide : thy star alone,—“ *Se tu segui tua stella !* ” Thy star alone, now clear-beaming over Chaos, nay

Reward

now by fits gone out, disastrously eclipsed : this only shalt thou strive to follow. O, it is a business, as I fancy, that of weltering your way through Chaos and the murk of Hell ! Green-eyed dragons watching you, three-headed Cerberuses,—not without sympathy of *their* sort ! “*Eccovi l'uom ch'è stato all' Inferno.*” For in fine, as Poet Dryden says, you do walk hand in hand with sheer Madness, all the way,—who is by no means pleasant company ! You look fixedly into Madness, and *her* undiscovered, boundless, bottomless Night-empire ; that you may extort new Wisdom out of it, as an Eurydice from Tartarus. The higher the Wisdom, the closer was its neighborhood and kindred with mere Insanity ; literally so :—and thou wilt, with a speechless feeling, observe how highest Wisdom, struggling up into this world, has oftentimes carried such tinctures and adhesions of Insanity still cleaving to it hither !

All Works, each in their degree, are a making of Madness sane ;—truly enough a religious operation ; which cannot be carried on without religion. You have not work otherwise ; you have eye-service, greedy grasping of wages, swift and ever swifter manufacture of semblances to get hold of wages. Instead of better felt-hats to cover your head, you

Reward

have bigger lath-and-plaster hats set traveling the streets on wheels. Instead of heavenly and earthly Guidance for the souls of men, you have "Black or White Surplice" Controversies, stuffed hair-and-leather Popes;—terrestrial *Law-wards*, Lords and Law-bringers, "organizing Labor" in these years, by passing Corn-Laws. With all which, alas, this distracted Earth is now full, nigh to bursting. Semblances most smooth to the touch and eye; most accursed nevertheless to body and soul. Semblances, be they of Sham-woven Cloth or of Dilettante Legislation, which are *not* real wool or substance, but Devil's-dust, accursed of God and man! No man has worked, or can work, except religiously; not even the poor day-laborer, the weaver of your coat, the sewer of your shoes. All men, if they work not as in a Great Taskmaster's eye, will work wrong, work unhappily for themselves and you.

Industrial work, still under bondage to Mammon, the rational soul of it not yet awakened, is a tragic spectacle. Men in the rapidesst motion and self-motion; restless, with convulsive energy, as if driven by Galvanism, as if possessed by a Devil; tearing asunder mountains,—to no purpose, for Mammonism is always Midas-eared! This is sad, on the

Reward

face of it. Yet courage : the beneficent Destinies, kind in their sternness, are apprising us that this cannot continue. Labor is not a devil, even while encased in Mammonism ; Labor is ever an imprisoned god, writhing unconsciously or consciously to escape out of Mammonism ! Plugson of Undershot, like Taillefer of Normandy, wants victory ; how much happier will even Plugson be to have a Chivalrous victory than a Chactaw one. The unredeemed ugliness is that of a slothful People. Show me a People energetically busy ; heaving, struggling, all shoulders at the wheel ; their heart pulsing, every muscle swelling, with man's energy and will ;—I show you a People of whom great good is already predictable ; to whom all manner of good is yet certain, if their energy endure. By very working they will learn ; they have, Antæus-like, their foot on Mother Fact : how can they but learn ?

The vulgarest Plugson of a Master-worker, who can command Workers, and get work out of them, is already a considerable man. Blessed and thrice-blessed symptoms I discern of Master Workers who are not vulgar men ; who are Nobles, and begin to feel that they must act as such : all speed to these, they are England's hope at present ! But in this Plug-

Reward

son himself, conscious of almost no nobleness whatever, how much is there ! Not without man's faculty, insight, courage, hard energy, is this rugged figure. His words none of the wisest ; but his actings cannot be altogether foolish. Think, how were it, stoddest thou suddenly in his shoes ! He has to command a thousand men. And not imaginary commanding ; no, it is real, incessantly practical. The evil passions of so many men (with the Devil in them, as in all of us) he has to vanquish ; by manifold force of speech and of silence, to repress or evade. What a force of silence, to say nothing of the others, is in Plugson ! For these his thousand men he has to provide raw-material, machinery arrangement, house-room ; and ever at the week's end, wages by due sale. No Civil-List, or Goulburn-Baring Budget has he to fall back upon, for paying of his regiment ; he has to pick his supplies from the confused face of the whole Earth and Contemporaneous History, by his dexterity alone. There will be dry eyes if he fail to do it !—He exclaims, at present, "black in the face," near strangled with Dilettante Legislation ; "Let me have elbow-room, throat-room, and I will not fail ! No, I will spin yet, and conquer like a giant ; what 'sinews of war' lie in me, untold re-